

DISSERTATION

RAND

The Eye of the Believer

*Psychological Influences
on Counter-Terrorism
Policy-Making*

Jonathan M. Schachter

RAND Graduate School

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The Eye of the Believer Psychological Influences on Counter-Terrorism Policy-Making

Jonathan M. Schachter

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This document was prepared as a dissertation in September 2002 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Policy Analysis at the RAND Graduate School of Policy Studies. The faculty committee that supervised and approved the dissertation consisted of Roger W. Benjamin (Chair), Brian Michael Jenkins, and Kevin M. O'Connell. Debra Welch Larson was the outside reader for the dissertation.

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PREFACE

This research examines social psychological aspects of the foreign and counter-terrorism policy-making processes. It presents common psychological biases that affect understanding the behavior of foreign actors in general and of sub-state terrorist groups in particular, and discusses the impact these biases can have on policies and ways in which the effects of these biases can be limited in the future. It concludes by presenting a critical analysis of specific counter-terrorism policy options for the near- and long-term, with a particular emphasis on meeting America's stated policy objective of deterring future terrorism. The study's findings will be of interest to the intelligence community, to foreign, defense and counter-terrorism policy-makers and analysts, and to scholars interested in understanding past counter-terrorism policies with an eye to improving future policy choices.

Portions of this study were conducted as part of RAND's continuing program of self-sponsored research. We acknowledge the support for such research provided by the independent research and development provisions of RAND's contracts for the operation of its Department of Defense federally funded research and development centers: Project AIR FORCE (sponsored by the US. Air Force), the Arroyo Center (sponsored by the U.S. Army), and the National Defense Research Institute (sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the unified commands, and the defense agencies). The opinions and conclusions expressed are those of the author and should not be interpreted as representing those of RAND or any of the agencies or others sponsoring its research.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines social psychological aspects of the foreign and counter-terrorism policy-making processes. It presents common psychological biases that affect understanding the behavior of foreign actors in general and of sub-state terrorist groups in particular, and discusses the impact these biases can have on policies and ways in which the effects of these biases can be limited in the future.

Three illustrative historical case studies are presented, namely, examinations of then-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's negotiation with Syrian president Hafiz al-Assad following the 1973 Arab-Israeli War; the U.S. and Israeli understanding of the interests of and use of violence by Hamas and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) since 1993; and the gross differences in perception of American counter-terrorism deterrent messages by both the senders and receivers of those messages that ultimately led to the deterrence failure on September 11. In each case, particular focus is placed on how these actors have understood U.S. behavior. Other examples are taken from past and current U.S. efforts to combat terrorism. Together, these cases demonstrate how often-imperceptible motivated and/or unmotivated psychological biases have affected the actors involved, distorting their situational assessments and constraining their subsequent decision-making, resulting in harm to U.S. long-term interests with consequent, substantial loss of life.

The demonstrable impact of these psychological factors suggests that counter-bias strategies, including creating awareness of preconceptions and biases and employment of the placement methodology for bringing history to bear on decision-making, might have led to different sets of decisions. Woven throughout the case studies are alternative placements of the main actors, and a presentation of the related policy options that might have been available and

known to U.S. decision-makers if they had access to similar analysis based on these strategies. In other words, assumptions are both challenged and re-developed for the tasks at hand. The dissertation concludes by presenting a critical analysis of specific counter-terrorism policy options for the near- and long-term, with a particular emphasis on meeting America's stated policy objective of deterring future terrorism.

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Many friends and colleagues helped me throughout the crafting of this dissertation who are due my heartfelt thanks. My dissertation committee members, Brian Michael Jenkins, Kevin O'Connell and especially committee chairman Roger Benjamin, each with a wealth of experience in, and remarkable perspective on, different aspects of the subject, have been enthusiastic supporters and reviewers from the very beginning. Our discussions of the evolving text have been a high point of my stint at the RAND Graduate School (RGS), and to my mind, represent what intellectual discourse is supposed to be. I am grateful for their guidance, encouragement and support. In addition, I did not know when I first enrolled in Deborah Welch Larson's graduate seminar on the making of American foreign policy, the impact she and her important work on the psychology of foreign policy would have on my studies. The dissertation is stronger for her many constructive comments. I thank her for her insight and her inspiration.

I want to thank a number of RGS colleagues who have helped me by reality-checking my thoughts and in navigating the often-stormy waters of graduate school: Brian Houghton, Joel Shapiro, Lorne Teitelbaum and Katia Vlachos-Dengler. Thanks also to Paul Davis, who, as the leader of a project examining broader questions of deterrence strategy for countering terrorism, read and reread numerous versions of the text that ultimately became Chapters Four and Five, providing many helpful comments and suggestions along the way.

Whether face-to-face or by telephone from across the country or around the world, John Godfrey has been, and he continues to be, a source of tremendous knowledge, built on a wealth of unique experience and complemented by an incisive sense of humor. His perspective and friendship have enriched the dissertation and broadened my horizons.

Since I first met him when I was an undergraduate, Peter Hayes has been a sage mentor and a dear friend, and in both roles he has left an indelible impression upon me and upon my work. From the dissertation's inception, Peter patiently has helped me develop ideas and generously and thoughtfully read and commented on successive drafts. I am so grateful.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents for their boundless support and encouragement. With boundless love and gratitude, I dedicate this work to them.

INTRODUCTION

The concomitantly cooperative and competitive nature of people creates an almost constant need to try to understand and predict the behavior of others. From playground politics to teenage flirtations, and from economic forecasting to intelligence analysis, great efforts are invested to gain insight into the decision-making of friend and foe alike. Indeed, this pursuit lies at the heart of the social sciences in general and of policy analysis in particular. As we are all in various degrees and at various times both inconsistent and inclined to obfuscation when it comes to our motives and goals, behavioral prediction is a most difficult task.

The obstacles to successfully understanding the behavior of others go well beyond human inconsistency, however, and particularly for those charged with national security. Foreign policy and defense analysts use means both human and technical – from spies to satellites and from studying history to running complex game theoretical models – in their search for clues about the intentions of those who threaten the state. Understandably, the greater the differences – linguistic, cultural, religious, social – between the actors being studied and those studying them, the more difficult it is to grasp the multitude of factors that influence the former's perspective and behavior. Overcoming these differences has been an ongoing concern of analysts, who today continue the longstanding tradition – reflected in the works of Ruth Benedict, Nathan Leites and others – of trying to get to know one's enemy. Making things more difficult is that, unlike their counterparts in, for example, economics, who can rely on large data sets to test theories of consumer or producer behavior, analysts of national security matters often focus their attention on a small number of foreign decision-makers (e.g., heads of state). Political power often does not provide statistical power.

Yet another category of obstacles exists in the minds of analysts and decision-makers. This is not to say that these obstacles are imaginary; they are very real

and remarkably powerful. These obstacles are the increasingly well understood psychological biases that affect the ways human beings process information, causing us to see what we want and/or expect to see and simultaneously leading us to exclude other possibilities from consideration. These biases are a distorting by-product of the helpful mental mechanisms that allow us to assess and understand incoming data without having to re-learn everything we see every time we see it. In recent decades scholars have documented the effects of these biases on the processes of foreign policy-making and ways in which these effects can be mitigated.

The stakes always have been high. During the Cold War, the threat of nuclear war made understanding Soviet behavior an intelligence task of primary importance. Today's already realized threat of catastrophic terrorism within the borders of the American homeland makes understanding terrorist actors similarly vital. In this dissertation, we build on the existing models of foreign policy-making, examining the impact of these same psychological biases on cases of counter-terrorism policy-making.

It is far easier to identify counter-terrorism failures than successes. To be sure, there have been headline-grabbing successes, such as hostage rescues and terrorist arrests, but true counter-terrorism success prevents attacks from happening in the first place. In other words, the best indication of counter-terrorism success is uninterrupted daily life. The person on the street feels nothing. Not surprisingly, the absence of action typically does not capture the attention of journalists, scholars or decision-makers. On the other hand, counter-terrorism policy failures, with their consequent death and destruction, are naturally newsworthy. Thus, there is a close link between the high costs of policy failures and their ease of identification. The focus on policy failures in this dissertation is not to suggest that there have been no successes. Nor is it simply the result of easily accessible cases, since the failures stand out for everyone to

see. The urgent focus on failure simply reflects the potentially life-threatening future consequences of not addressing the causes of past problems.

Our application of social psychological theories and counter-bias strategies to questions of counter-terrorism has yielded promising results for policy-making. Specifically, in each of the case study analyses in the chapters that follow, this approach revealed alternative, plausible assumptions and hypotheses about the foreign actors involved, and subsequent conclusions, which carry greater explanatory power than those that prevailed among contemporary decision-makers during the course of the events reviewed. It is possible that if such analysis had been conducted by the protagonists, similar conclusions could have been reached, with potentially more favorable outcomes. The case studies, then, serve two functions. First, by successfully applying the methods outlined in the pages that follow to instances of intrinsically important foreign and counter-terrorism policy-making, we demonstrate the approach's potential benefits as a tool (or tool set) for narrowing the gaps in understanding foreign terrorists and other antagonists in current and future policy analysis. Second, as the number of case studies so analyzed grows, decision-makers will have an increasingly expansive library of new, non-intuitive ideas from which to draw for dealing with the crises that they will inevitably face in the future. The cases presented here thus represent a modest starting point upon which others will hopefully build.

In Chapter One, we review past and current efforts to understand foreign actors and introduce the psychological factors that undermine those efforts. We present specific, recent examples from the so-called "war on terrorism," where these factors have colored the ways in which Islamist terrorists have been understood and profiled. In some cases, the conventional profiles appear to say more about their authors than about their subjects. The chapter concludes with a discussion

of counter-bias strategies and other methodologies that are used in our analyses of the case studies in the chapters that follow.

Chapter Two examines the assumptions and decision-making of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger during his shuttle negotiations with Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad in the wake of the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. While the subject is only tangentially related to terrorism, it is instructive as an example of a complex foreign policy issue where, despite an acute awareness of locally and internationally relevant factors, a particular psychological bias appears to have impeded the consideration of possible alternative outcomes and related negotiation strategies that might have yielded results closer to those Kissinger had hoped to achieve in his dealings with Asad in 1973 and 1974.

In Chapter Three, we discuss a fraction of the history of the post-Oslo Middle East peace process, paying particular attention to the assumptions that informed the decision-making of the United States, Israel, the Palestinian National Authority and the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, as well as the assumptions behind analyses of these actors' behavior. Specifically, we will address the commonly held belief that Hamas terrorism is intended to "torpedo the peace process." This conventional wisdom, we will argue, is marked by significant inaccuracies that are the result of a mix of shallow understanding of the actors involved and, more importantly, decision-makers' and analysts' own preconceptions. We will present an analysis of the pattern of violence since 1993 and offer an alternative explanation for it, concluding with a theoretical discussion of the implications the alternative explanation carries with it for preventing terrorism in the future.

Chapters Four and Five cut across past, present and future in seeking to understand the potential benefits and limitations of a strategy (or sub-strategy) of deterrence toward terrorist groups like al- Qa'idah. In Chapter Four, we

present a historical and theoretical examination of the U.S.-al-Qa'idah interaction – both al-Qa'idah's perception and its sources as well as the American understanding of its own image in the eyes of al-Qa'idah – and how the synergy between them contributed to the deterrence shortfall on September 11. This historical review is informed by the deterrence and political psychology literature, both of which lend a great deal of insight into the difficulties inherent to deterring a group like al-Qa'idah. We examine many of the factors that weaken counter-terrorist deterrent power, linking them to likely psychological reasons that their implications at times have been difficult to see.

Finally, Chapter Five concludes the dissertation with the examination and recommendation of more specific policy options for the near- and long-term, with a particular emphasis on meeting America's stated policy objective of deterring future terrorism. Building on the political psychology literature, we present the various positive and negative influences on deterrence vis-à-vis Islamist terrorist groups and related policy actions. It is clear that many of the deterrence policy recommendations found in the Cold War literature rely on the assumption of state actors. The invalidity of this and other assumptions in the context of deterring terrorism suggests that the same policy levers that would deter a state might actually inspire a sub-state terrorist group to attack. Additionally, the approach developed here allows us to complement the threat element of deterrence with case-specific, relevant incentives and inducements to the non-use of terrorist violence. Taken together, we believe the refined deterrence and inducement components offer decision-makers improved prospects for contending successfully with the non-traditional, post-September 11 international security environment.

The methodologies presented and applied in this dissertation are not a silver bullet for creating functional, guaranteed counter-terrorism policies. We do not have all the answers and by nature are subject to the very same biases of which

we are critical in others' analyses. The difference lies in our explicit recognition and consideration of the limitations of our own analysis resulting from these biases. As will be discussed in Chapter One, acknowledgement of the biases and their effects is a crucial first step toward improving and clarifying one's perceptions. While it remains impossible for us to eliminate the distortions of psychological and other biases, the results of our research, we believe, are encouraging insofar as they demonstrate that reduction and management, rather than elimination, of these biases can improve counter-terrorism policy analysis meaningfully. Predicting the behavior of others remains difficult. It is our hope that the methods presented in this dissertation will make it somewhat less so for the reader, and that the analyses found here will themselves provide or suggest ideas for successfully addressing specific future challenges.

CHAPTER ONE CONTEXTUALIZATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS

The philosopher, as we free spirits understand him – as the man of the greatest responsibility, who has the conscience for the general development of mankind – will use religion for his disciplining and educating work, just as he will use the contemporary political and economic conditions. – Friedrich Nietzsche¹

It is now clear that the coordinated seizure of four commercial aircraft and their use to strike targets on the ground on September 11, 2001 was perpetrated by a global, Islamist² terrorist network known as al-Qa'idah (pronounced kah-i-dah, 'the base'), headed by Usama bin Laden. This group's hostility to the United States is not new – its members (to the extent that this term can be used) and associates have been implicated in the 1993 car bombing of the World Trade Center (6 dead, over 1000 wounded), the 1995 and 1996 attacks on American forces in Saudi Arabia (25 dead, over 260 wounded), the coordinated attacks in 1998 on the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es-Salaam (224 dead, over 5000 wounded) and the October 2000 attack on the USS Cole (17 dead, 39 wounded). Neither is U.S. experience with Islamist terror new. The 1983 bombings of the

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, Helen Zimmern, trans. (London: T. N. Foulis, 1914), 79. Emphasis in the original.

² There has been an ongoing debate about how best to define modern Islamic movements (i.e., are they fundamentalists, revivalists, radicals, extremists, etc.?). For consistency's sake, we will use the terms "Islamists" and "Islamism" throughout this essay to refer to activists and their organizations that, among other goals, seek to create Islamic polities based on a strict interpretation of Islamic law. Many excellent articles and books have been written about Islamism, Islamist terrorism, Islamic-Western relations and other related topics. Among the best are Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985); Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); R. Scott Appleby, ed., *Spokesmen for the Despised: Fundamentalist Leaders of the Middle East* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1997); Martin Kramer, ed., *The Islamism Debate*, Dayan Center Papers 120 (Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University, 1997); Martin Kramer, *Arab Awakening and Islamic Revival: The Politics of Ideas in the Middle East* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1996); Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994); John L. Esposito, ed., *Voices of Resurgent Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); and Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, *Contemporary Islam and the Challenge of History* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1982).

U.S. embassy and Marine barracks in Beirut (304 dead, over 200 wounded) and the kidnapping of Americans and other Westerners in Lebanon throughout the 1980s also were the handiwork of Islamist groups.

Some analysts have taken notice of the rise in religious terrorism worldwide in recent decades and discerned ways in which it differs from what was seen in the past as more secular, ideological or ethnic terrorism. The data suggest that religious terrorists are not bound by the same self-imposed limits as their secular counterparts, with the result being that religious terrorism claims many more victims per attack.³ Religious terrorism is demonstrably more lethal.

Unfortunately, prevailing Western analytic treatment of religion in the policy realm tends to be Manichean, characterized by dualistic stereotypes that make little allowance for shades of gray. Worse, perhaps, is the common assumption that the Western understanding of the societal and individual place and power of religion, to give but one example, is universally applicable. This problem is not limited to the field of counter-terrorism policy research. In recent decades there have been a number of American foreign and defense policy failures stemming from similarly over-generalized assumptions about political behavior, only some of which have to do with terrorism. In this dissertation, we will examine a number of the assumptions that underlie American foreign policy in general, and counter-terrorism policy in particular, the psychological and other factors influencing those assumptions, and their ultimate impact on policy.

³ Bruce Hoffman, "Terrorism Trends and Prospects," *Countering the New Terrorism*, Ian O. Lesser et al. (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1999), 15-20.

Can “Placement” Keep Us Honest?

To help avoid the pitfalls of misplaced universalism, Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May write of the importance of “placing strangers” in their *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision-Makers*:

For effective analysis or management, the kind that is not just academically right but gets something done, it is crucial, we think, to anticipate and take into account the different ways in which different actors see the world and their roles in it – not only organizationally but also humanly as individuals.⁴

Neustadt and May define placement as “using historical information to enrich initial stereotypes about another person’s outlook – ‘sophisticating’ stereotypes in the sense of adding facets or perspectives or at least shadings to what otherwise are very crude conjectures.”⁵ They detail a methodology that includes examination of both the public and personal history of an individual or group as the basis for understanding or anticipating resultant points of view. For the purposes of this dissertation, we expand on this definition to include socio-cultural, religious and other factors that the amorphous category “history” might miss. Additionally, we apply some of the techniques to non-state actors (i.e., terrorist groups and networks), though the language in Neustadt and May generally is limited to foreign states and their leaders as the subjects of placement. The methodology appears as equally relevant – if not more so – to the current non-traditional political/military environment as it was to the Cold War when it originally was formulated.

⁴ Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision-Makers* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), 157.

⁵ Ibid., 159.

Psychological Barriers to Placement

Efforts to gain insight into the different behavior of foreign actors, particularly those considered enemies, is hardly a new idea. In June 1944, in anticipation of a protracted war with Japan, the Office of War Information assigned cultural anthropologist Ruth Benedict the task of studying "Japanese habits of thought and emotion and the patterns into which these habits fell." As Benedict put it in her resulting study, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, "We had to put aside for the moment the premises on which we act as Americans and to keep ourselves as far as possible from leaping to the easy conclusion that what we would do in a given situation was what they would do."⁶ The diplomatic and political exigencies of the Cold War led to other systematic efforts to understand the past and future behavior of foreign actors, such as Raymond A. Bauer, Alex Inkeles and Clyde Kluckhohn's *How The Soviet System Works*,⁷ and the development of "operational codes," a term made famous by Nathan Leites's classic RAND study, *The Operational Code of the Politburo*. Leites, like Neustadt and May, recognized the importance of understanding foreign actors on their own terms and in historical context:

To ensure the best predictions of Politburo action, many kinds of data besides the writings of Lenin and Stalin should be analyzed. The historical record reveals unverbalized, but equally important, rules of conduct of this group of policy-makers. It may also reveal a disposition to deviate from recognized rules under certain conditions.⁸

⁶ Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (Boston: Riverside Press, 1946), 4-5.

⁷ Raymond A. Bauer, Alex Inkeles and Clyde Kluckhohn, *How The Soviet System Works: Cultural, Psychological, and Social Themes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956).

The seemingly obvious task of placement, in fact the heart of what Graham Allison famously termed the Rational Actor Model,⁹ is notoriously difficult to accomplish objectively. As Ron Robin has pointed out in his meticulously researched *The Making of the Cold War Enemy*, the work of Leites and other operational codebreakers often was dominated by an exceedingly normative American understanding of foreign political behavior, and often was dismissive of the possibility of rationally chosen ideological commitment that strayed from the American model.¹⁰ Instead, Robin claims, Leites focused on “chance gestures of speech that might uncover the real – mostly unconscious, psychopathological – motivation of the Bolshevik character.¹¹ While Robin comes across at times as overcritical and impatient with the contemporary beliefs of the scholars he examines, he is correct in pointing out the problematically universalist and/or provincial tendencies in the formulation of operational codes and in other Cold War studies of foreign actors.¹² Throughout his work, Robin focuses on ethnocentrism, American ideological commitment and influence, and fear as the reasons behind the shortcomings of these studies.

In recent decades, American analytic abilities vis-à-vis the Islamic world also have been hindered by strong ethnocentric forces, pulling from both West and East. These manifest themselves strongly in the American academy, which remains the most important training ground for American analysts and decision-makers alike. The sources of bias can be divided into two general categories,

⁸ Nathan Leites, *The Operational Code of the Politburo* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951), xiii. A similar case is made in Gordon H. McCormick, “Surprise, Perceptions, and Military Style,” *Orbis* 26.4 (Winter 1983): 834-6.

⁹ Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, Second Edition (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1999), 4-5, 10.

¹⁰ Ron Robin, *The Making of the Cold War Enemy: Culture and Politics in the Military-Intellectual Complex* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 131.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 133.

corresponding roughly to two groups upon whose expertise the nation relies – in varying degree – for analytical support in dealing with Islamist terrorism. The first group, affected by what we will call loosely Western biases, comprises primarily terrorism experts and other political and social scientists. The second, affected by an eclectic mix of Eastern and post-modernist biases, is made up largely of academics specializing in Middle Eastern affairs. The limitations of both groups have undermined their ability, and in some cases, even their inclination, to aid and advise decision-makers, who typically are neither experts in terrorism nor in the nuances of the Islamic world.

Identifying the source of bias in foreign policy analysis as ethnocentrism tells only half the story, however, for ethnocentrism – whether from West or East – is itself an intermediate cause, being itself the result of well-known, documented psychological phenomena. Forty-five year CIA veteran Richards J. Heuer, Jr. discusses the problem in his *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis*:

To see the options faced by foreign leaders as these leaders see them, one must understand their values and assumptions and even their misperceptions and misunderstandings. Without such insight, interpreting foreign leaders' decisions or forecasting future decisions is often little more than partially informed speculation. Too frequently, foreign behavior appears "irrational" or "not in their own best interest." Such conclusions often indicate analysts have projected American values and conceptual frameworks onto the foreign leaders and societies, rather than understanding [sic] the logic of the situation as it appears to them.¹³

¹² Robin is not the first to observe this problem. See, for example, Alexander L. George, *Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective Use of Information and Advice* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980), 46-7.

It is difficult not to be struck by this passage, given the frequent popular and official references to bin Laden and his associates as “crazy madmen” who have “distorted Islam” to justify their acts of terror. These claims may be true, but they are not as self-evident as the statements of media figures and public officials would suggest. On the contrary, analysis of the kind suggested by Neustadt, May and Heuer makes the Islamist movements’ violent interaction with the United States much more comprehensible and possibly even predictable. These groups do have their own rational ways of conceiving their interests. We have done a lamentable job of properly and consistently identifying them.

Heuer, Robert Jervis, Deborah Welch Larson and others have done pioneering work in bringing social psychological theories to bear on foreign policy issues, and in documenting psychological phenomena relevant for foreign policy analysis.¹⁴ Many of these phenomena can be categorized as either unmotivated (seeing what we expect to see) or motivated (seeing what we want to see) biases.¹⁵ For example, in his chapter, “Perception: Why Can’t We See What Is There To Be Seen?,” Heuer systematically discusses a number of scientifically observed, psychological phenomena that can lead to the kind of biased analysis mentioned above in which foreigners are assumed to behave as we would, a

¹³ Richards J. Heuer, Jr., *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis* (Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Intelligence, 1999), 33. This point is also made in Gregory F. Treverton, *Reshaping National Intelligence in an Age of Information* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 208-9.

¹⁴ See especially, Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976); Heuer, *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis*; and Deborah Welch Larson, *Origins of Containment: A Psychological Explanation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).

¹⁵ For a more fundamental discussion of motivated and unmotivated biases from the psychology literature, see Thomas Gilovich, *How We Know What Isn’t So: The Fallibility of Human Reason in Everyday Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1991); Richard Nisbett and Lee Ross, *Human Inference: Strategies and Shortcomings of Social Judgment* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980); and Scott Plous, *The Psychology of Judgment and Decision Making* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993).

process known as mirror-imaging, and against which he cautions in the strongest terms.¹⁶

The difficulties in understanding foreign actors have been noted even by Islamists themselves, such as Mahmud Abouhalima, interviewed by Mark Juergensmeyer, and now serving a life sentence for his role in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing:

He [Abouhalima] said that he understood the secular West because he had lived like a Westerner in Germany and the United States. The seventeen years he had lived in the West, Abouhalima told me, “is a fair amount of time to understand what the hell is going on in the United States and in Europe about secularism or people, you know, who have no religion.” He went on to say, “I lived their life, but they didn’t live my life, so they will never understand the way I live or the way I think.”¹⁷

While Abouhalima’s view reflects an extreme cultural relativism, Heuer, in noting the multitude of sources that can influence our expectations and thus, our analysis as well, sums up the important part of Abouhalima’s message quite succinctly: “We tend to perceive what we expect to perceive.”¹⁸

Bolstering the inclination to see what we expect to see is the tendency to hold fast to our initial beliefs and interpret new data in ways that fit our preconceived notions, making the already unnatural goal of disproving (rather than proving)

¹⁶ Heuer, *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis*, 70-1.

¹⁷ Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 69.

¹⁸ Heuer, *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis*, 8-9.

our own hypotheses even more difficult.¹⁹ Robert Jervis puts the phenomenon of interpreting data to support existing beliefs in policy-making in more familiar epistemological terms, noting the equivalence to the Kuhnian paradigm in the natural sciences: "While evidence must be adduced to support a theory, the inferences drawn depend on our theories...."²⁰

The result of these common, natural, psychological biases is that while analysts continue to recognize the need for placement (using various terms for the process), it remains a difficult and complex task. In the pages and chapters that follow, we shall present specific, recent examples where these biases and their resultant ideological and ethnocentric influences have undermined the quality, objectivity and scope of analysis of Islamist terrorism-related issues. We shall conclude the chapter by presenting a number of counter-bias strategies that we employ in the case study chapters that make up the remainder of the dissertation.

Is this Islam?

An apparent example of motivated bias can be found in the various discussions about whether the terrorism that al-Qa'idah practices is in fact Islamic. Media pundits and decision-makers alike have gone to great lengths to assert that the attack on September 11 was not truly Islamic. Attorney General John Ashcroft, after investigators recovered a letter belonging to suspected September 11 terrorists:

¹⁹ Ibid., 16; Nisbett and Ross, *Human Inference*, 170-1.

²⁰ Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, 156. This point is also made in Charles G. Lord, Lee Ross, and Mark R. Lepper, "Biased Assimilation and Attitude Polarization: The Effects of Prior Theories on Subsequently Considered Evidence," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 37.11 (November 1979): 2108.

Let me make clear that, while this letter contains a number of religious references, I do not believe it to be representative of Muslims or the Islamic faith. The letter is a stark reminder of how these hijackers grossly perverted the Islamic faith to justify their terrorist acts.²¹

Frankly, the discussion as to whether or not this terror is Islamic would be irrelevant, or even humorous (Is John Ashcroft *really* deciding what is or is not Islamic?), were it not for its potential to threaten good analysis seriously. To be sure, the president, the vice-president, the attorney general, members of the media and other public figures are walking a tightrope. Statements such as these undoubtedly are informed by the wise desire to maintain order and stability, both at home and abroad. Domestically, an anti-Islamic witch-hunt would be destructive, divisive and sow fear in every major American city. It would raise the specter of the regrettable Japanese-American internment during World War II and the attendant civil rights issues. Any statements perceived as vilifying the American Muslim population would also serve to radicalize it, creating a two-way self-fulfilling prophecy. That is, the Islamists would be proved right insofar as America would be seen as waging war against Islam, and the resultant Muslim hostility to the American authorities would validate the latter's concerns.

Abroad, observers are right in noting that most Muslims are not Islamists and even among those that are, most do not choose the path offered by al-Qa'idah. Further, the United States has important relationships with governments in the Islamic world whose hold on power is based on a precarious balance between Islamic sentiment on the one hand and national interests bound with those of the United States on the other. Attempting to separate the Islamists from other Muslims is an important part of American efforts to maintain stability in the

²¹ "FBI Recovers Letter Belonging to 3 Hijackers," CNN.com, September 28, 2001, Internet: <http://www.cnn.com/2001/US/09/28/inv.document.terrorism/index.html> .

Islamic world while garnering support for counter-terrorist military and diplomatic action against and within countries with Muslim majorities. This is a point to which we shall return in Chapter Five.

At the same time, however, the government and the media have an obligation not to mislead the public about the nature of the threat.²² For the purposes of analysis, these public statements are dangerous. Al-Qa'idah is Islamic. Its membership might represent a tiny fraction of Muslims. Its beliefs and practices might strongly contradict and deviate from traditional understandings of the Qur'an and Islamic law. The bottom line, however, is that this movement, like Hizballah, Hamas and others, comes from the same Islamic kernel as other, non-violent streams within Islam. Furthermore, all these movements claim to speak in the name of, and most definitely do speak in the language of, Islam. Religion is not democratic, except over time; that most Muslims do not practice terrorism is immaterial here. The Islamic roots and Islamically based doctrine of al-Qa'idah make it Islamic. The situation is akin to that of the Jewish terrorists who conspired to blow up the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. Most Jews did not support such an action and would agree that it would constitute a violation of Jewish law. But the very fact that these zealots were Jews, who planned their act in the name of Judaism to initiate the process of bringing the Messiah and rebuilding the Temple, makes it a Jewish act. To the extent that the Ku Klux Klan uses the Bible and Christian theology to support its positions, it is a Christian movement. It is not by chance that the most active Klan group in the United States is the *Church of the American Knights of the Ku Klux Klan*.²³

²² The frequent sanitization of the term *jihad* provides one example. To cut to the chase, see Bernard Lewis, "Jihad vs. Crusade" *WSJ.com OpinionJournal*, September 27, 2001, Internet: <http://www.opinionjournal.com/extra/?id=95001224>. The citation of Qur'anic verses that attest to the peaceful nature of Islam is a particularly galling practice that should cease. Much as is the case with the Bible, it is easy to find passages that justify violence as well. It is these that Islamists so inclined choose for their own purposes.

²³ "ADL Backgrounder – Church of the American Knights of the Ku Klux Klan," 22 October 1999, Internet: http://www.adl.org/backgrounders/american_knights_kkk.html.

Understanding the Klan without understanding its (claimed) moral underpinnings would be incomplete. So too for the Islamist movements. What constitutes “true” religion, at a given point in time, is almost entirely in the eye of the believer.

It would be a mistake, then, to ignore the Islamic nature and basis of al-Qa’idah and other Islamist groups. As noted above, for us to place the group and possibly predict its actions, we must be able to cast aside what we are inclined to believe so that we can analyze it on its members’ own terms. This has proved difficult not just for journalists and decision-makers, but for many academics as well.

In recent years, there have been a number of books, like John L. Esposito’s *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, Fred Halliday’s *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation* and Fawaz A. Gerges’s *America and Political Islam: Clash of Cultures or Clash of Interests?*, that have made the important point that not all Muslims hate the West and pose a threat, yet have glossed over the distinctly and unmistakably Islamic nature of groups like al-Qa’idah. Esposito almost mockingly writes of what appears to him to be alarmist Western journalism:

Belief in an impending clash between the Muslim world and the West was reflected in America by headlines and television programs such as “A Holy War Heads Our Way,” “Jihad in America,” “Focus: Islamic Terror: Global Suicide Squad,” “I believe in Islamaphobia,” “Algerians in London Fund Islamic Terrorism,” and “France Back on the Rack”....²⁴

²⁴ John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* Third Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 213-4.

One does not have to believe in a full-scale, all-encompassing “clash of civilizations” between the Muslim world and the West to share the concerns reflected in the headlines Esposito cites. “Jihad in America” dealt largely with Islamic charities in the United States that were funneling money to terrorist groups abroad. The federal government is now acting against such fronts.²⁵ The events of September 11 demonstrated that there is such a thing as a “global suicide squad.” That Algerians in London fund Islamic terrorism is not quite so incredible today as Esposito suggested when he wrote his book in 1992 and revised it in 1995 and again in 1999.

Esposito is not alone in his dichotomous thinking. Gerges differentiates between two types of academics, analysts and policy-makers. On the one hand are the “confrontationalists,” those who subscribe to Samuel P. Huntington’s clash of civilizations idea. On the other are the “accommodationists,” who “distinguish between the actions of legitimate Islamist political opposition groups and the tiny extremist majority.”²⁶ Making this latter distinction is of great importance. However, Esposito and Gerges, perhaps out of their fear of much broader stereotyping, seemingly are unable to do so themselves. We argue for the study of Islam precisely so that we can gain insight into the actions of the extremists, who are our cause for concern. Doing so does not amount to a religion- or civilization-wide accusation.

Gerges admonishes American society, government officials and the media for harboring negative stereotypes of all Muslims and for playing fast and loose with the distinct populations of Islamists and Muslims, yet he is guilty of precisely the same sin. Writing about the appearance of a “new kind of anti-Semitism,”

²⁵ Noreen S. Ahmed-Ullah and Laurie Cohen, “Muslims Now Hesitant to Give,” *Chicago Tribune* September 30, 2001, Internet: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/chi-0109300457sep30.story>.

Gerges complains, "Some observers added fuel to the fire by warning of a coordinated international network of 'Islamic terrorist' groups throughout the United States with its guns aimed at Western interests."²⁷ He similarly is critical of those who argued that "Islamic extremism is bound to reach the shores of America through Muslim immigrants and visitors."²⁸ The warnings' striking resemblance to reality are beside the point here. For Gerges, pointing out that there are Islamic terrorist groups – peopled by Muslims and claiming to act in the name of Islam – is somehow an act of racist incitement. The harboring of inaccurate stereotypes of all Muslims is, of course, both wrong and counter-productive. Gerges, though, puts the blame for this almost exclusively on the history, politics and culture of the United States. He only glancingly acknowledges that such stereotypes have been fed in part by decades of American experience with Islamist terrorists, and he fails to mention that these groups consistently claim to represent true Islam.²⁹ For Gerges, criticism and study of the extremist minority somehow indicts the often-silent majority. He appears to be lumping Muslims and Islamists together every bit as much as those he criticizes.

Writing in *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* in 1996, Clarence J. Bouchat posits that "For Islam, as a religo-political bloc, to be a coherent threat, one billion people living in 45 Muslim majority countries must put aside their many differences to unite with a single purpose,"³⁰ then he attaches the caveat that "This line of thinking does not imply that Islamic revivalism poses no dangers to the West,

²⁶ Fawaz A. Gerges, *America and Political Islam: Clash of Cultures or Clash of Interests?* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 28-9.

²⁷ Ibid., 46.

²⁸ Ibid., 26.

²⁹ Gerges notes that U.S. experiences in Tehran and New York (1993) with Islamist groups have colored U.S. public and official opinion, but makes no mention of the U.S. experience in Beirut or with Osama bin Laden and al-Qa'ida. Ibid., 42-7.

only that intentional coherent threats if they exist, lie far in the future.”³¹ Five years later, although the attacks in New York and Washington yielded fewer casualties than might be expected in an global war between Islam and the West, few would argue that they do not represent an “intentional coherent threat.”

In the same edition of the journal, David G. Kibble hems and haws, saying at one point that “In practice … the case for militant Islam being a threat is weak; it is as weak in practice as the case is strong for militant Islam being a threat in theory.”³² He goes on to conclude that “This playing down of the threat is seen from a practical standpoint, i.e., the patchwork nature of revivalist Muslim groups, the rejection of violence by most revivalists, and the traditional subservience of the Arab mind [!].”³³ Confoundingly, he also notes the easily accessible Islamist exegesis of the Qur'an and Islamic law to justify violent actions, and counter-concludes that, “In terms of the West, there will no doubt continue to be a terrorist threat from a small group of politically militant Muslims.... In local terms, such a threat *should not be underestimated.*”³⁴ That Kibble recognizes the difference between large-scale civilizational strife and small group terrorism is important. However, his minimizing of the large threat threatens to steer the analysis away from examination of the Islamic context of what is, to him, at once the lesser threat and one that should not be underestimated. How should a decision-maker read this?

Halliday, in his chapter, “Islam and the West: ‘Threat of Islam’ or ‘Threat to Islam?’” also relies on the lack of a single, unified Islamic polity to argue against

³⁰ Clarence J. Bouchat, “A Fundamentalist Islamic Threat to the West,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 19: 342.

³¹ Ibid., 344.

³² David G. Kibble, “The Threat of Militant Islam: A Fundamental Reappraisal,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 19:362.

³³ Ibid., 363.

the existence of an Islamic threat.³⁵ He puts forth a logically flawed argument in rebuttal to the charge that Islam sanctions terrorism, stating that "...there has been terrorism aplenty, but no Islam, in Northern Ireland, Euzkadi, or Sri Lanka," as if the charge had been that Islam was a necessary precondition for terrorism. He goes on to identify, correctly, ways in which Islamists truly believe themselves to be on the defensive. Later in the same volume Halliday writes, "The fact that proponents of the religion claim something is no reason whatsoever to accept it...."³⁶ As we noted above, this is in fact the best reason to take it seriously, put it in context and try to understand its origin and meaning.

Nor should attempts to dismiss the idea of a clash of civilizations be accepted based on mere assertion or the observation that the Islamic world is not a monolith. The analytic reaction to nuance should not be coming to the simplest conclusion. For a whole host of reasons (and there is no shortage of domestic and international apologia on the matter), the September 11 attacks were met with a large measure of approval and even celebration across the Muslim world, while popular condemnation was notably limited. Though determining whether there is in fact such a clash is beyond the scope of this essay, Huntington will undoubtedly read differently under the post-September 11 circumstances.³⁷

Amazingly, Esposito's and Gerges's efforts to de-Islamize Islamic terror are not limited to rebutting what Westerners say, or minimizing their concerns. Esposito goes so far as to ignore the statements and actions of the Islamists themselves:

³⁴ Ibid., 362. Emphasis added.

³⁵ Fred Halliday, *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East* (London, I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1995), 113, 119-20.

³⁶ Ibid., 208.

The problem persists in the nineties. Fears of radical Islam, its threat to the Middle East and the West, loom large: that the Islamic republics of Iran and of Sudan collaborate as major exporters of terrorism and revolution, that Islamists are out to "hijack democracy" through participation in elections in countries like Algeria, and that fundamentalist terrorism has been exported to new battlegrounds, America and Europe.³⁸

In an earlier work, Esposito writes specifically about the Iranian goal of exporting the revolution using both peaceful and violent means.³⁹ Additionally, members of Algeria's Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) have said on many occasions that if they were to gain power democratically, they would then eliminate democracy. That is, democracy was an acceptable means of gaining power, but not for relinquishing it.⁴⁰ Even at the time of Esposito's writing, Islamist terrorism already had been exported to the United States and Europe. Esposito himself mentions the December 24, 1994 hijacking of an Air France plane by Algerian Islamists and their reported intentions of blowing it up over Paris.⁴¹

Why do Esposito and Gerges, prolific and respected researchers in the field of Middle Eastern Studies, work so hard to cleanse the image of Islamism? Why are they so hesitant to criticize, to take Islamists at their word and analyze their

³⁷ See, especially, Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the New World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 216-8.

³⁸ Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, 213.

³⁹ John L. Esposito, *Islam and Politics*, Third Edition (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1991), 207-8.

⁴⁰ See Yahia H. Zoubir, "Algerian Islamists' Conception of Democracy," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 18.3 (Summer 1996): 75-8, which quotes the FIS representative to Belgium as saying, "We are for democracy as a political practice only, not as a philosophical basis." Gerges is critical on this point as well, stating that "Washington's ambivalence toward the results of the 1991 parliamentary elections in Algeria... raises many questions about American commitment to democratization in the Muslim Middle East." Gerges, *America and Political Islam*, 103. Does it?

⁴¹ Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, 213.

movements on their own terms?⁴² Part of the answer might lie in a personal and professional ideological interest. Esposito is the founding director of the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding in the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, a role that presumably leaves him inclined to smooth out interfaith differences. Possibly intensifying this effect is the inclination to vary our scrutiny of data depending on their perceived support for or undermining of our preconceptions.⁴³ Esposito and Gerges, however, provide just two examples of a widespread trend that has hamstrung critical scholarship on the Middle East for almost a quarter century. Informed by post-modernist thought, many academics' imposing of ideologies of victimization on the Muslim world and their related tendency to ignore or justify the anti-Western statements of Islamists demonstrate the power and complexity of arguments driven by motivated biases; these ostensibly open-minded scholars also see what they want to see, and sometimes little else.⁴⁴

Placement in the Past

⁴² It should be noted that earlier in his career Esposito edited and co-edited important volumes that did carry the words of Islamists directly. See John L. Esposito, ed., *Voices of Resurgent Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); and John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito, eds., *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

⁴³ Gilovich, *How We Know What Isn't So*, 53-6, 78-84; Nisbett and Ross, *Human Inference*, 170-1.

⁴⁴ The post-modernist trend is both symbolized and justified by Edward W. Said's influential book, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), in which he avers that traditional Western scholarship on the Middle East is not only ethnocentric, but also itself a tool of imperialist domination of the peoples of the region. Despite its many logical and methodological flaws, *Orientalism* continues to have an impressive impact in the academy, and has been described by one scholar as "the most influential text on the Middle East" in the United States. See Barry Rubin, "The Truth about U.S. Middle East Policy," *MERIA Journal* 5.4 (December 2001), <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2001/issue4/jv5n4a1.htm>; and Andrew J. Rotter, "Saidism without Said," *American Historical Review* 105.4: 1205-1217. As this dissertation was being written, Martin Kramer published an important and controversial study in which he discusses Said's arguments and influence in detail and posits that, in part, it is responsible for the increasing irrelevance of American Middle Eastern studies for practical questions of foreign policy-making. See Martin Kramer, *Ivory Towers on Sand: The Failure of Middle Eastern Studies in America* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2001). For a particularly erudite analysis of *Orientalism*, see the chapter, "Orientalism and After: Ambivalence and Metropolitan Location in the Work of Edward Said" in Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory* (London: Verso, 1992), 159-219.

Our discussion of the many obstacles to understanding foreign actors on their own terms is not to imply that the United States has been blind to the regional/cultural context of al-Qa'idah or other players in the Islamic world. Decision-makers do, however, continue to struggle especially with the problem of mirror-imaging, tending to analyze actors in the Islamic world as if they were Westerners (e.g., by making assumptions about the appeal of religion and its role vis-à-vis the state, the role and rights of the individual, etc.). Thus, we find ourselves in the odd position of tolerating tyrants while expecting them to behave according to (at least some of) our own democratic beliefs. If our analysis better understood the regional and cultural context of these actors, then our expectations for their adherence to the norms of the international community (which are largely Western) could be appropriately framed and tailored to maximize compliance.

Beyond psychology, there is an additional, perhaps more conscious, reason that some analysts and decision-makers have tended to under- or misuse history, religious texts and cultural studies in their analysis – these instruments are often not scientifically rigorous. They rarely provide a definitive, final answer, and they come with no guarantees. In the current age, computing power often allows us to predict specific outcomes or else to rapidly model a multiplicity of outcomes in uncertain circumstances. High-resolution imagery facilitates accurate assessments of quantities of military hardware and force dispositions. In the shadow of such precise intelligence, the very human analysis of religious, social, cultural and other non-quantifiable factors appears to some to be behind the times, a relic of a less sophisticated era. Neustadt and May are up front on this subject:

So, while urging that placement be standard practice, we add a caution: Remember that its only purpose is to produce a better

working guess, a more sophisticated conjecture; the result is still a guess – a hypothesis – and it may be wrong.⁴⁵

It is important to remember here that the task at hand is difficult. Even if one were able to overcome completely the obstacles to good analysis discussed above, human decision-making is not governed by the kinds of laws that allow a physicist to predict missile trajectories. The very nature of forecasting human behavior is uncertain. But this does not make such analysis worthless. On the contrary, informed analysis can reduce the uncertainty involved in predicting a person's behavior. As Neustadt and May put the issue:

Our contention simply is that one improves one's guesses as one "places" her or him against large historical events, the stuff of public history, which *may* mold current views, and also against relatively small details of record in his or her personal history that *might* do much the same. When guessing must be done, we think it ought to be sophisticated in this fashion....⁴⁶

In the chapters that follow, three historical case studies will be presented, namely examinations of U.S. negotiation with Syrian president Hafiz al-Asad following the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, the U.S. and Israeli understanding of the interests of Hamas and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) since 1993 and U.S. deterrent posture vis-à-vis al-Qa'idah and other Islamist terrorist groups, with particular focus on *how these actors have understood U.S. behavior*. We will glean underlying assumptions and perceptions from primary and secondary sources,

⁴⁵ Neustadt and May, *Thinking in Time*, 211.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 159. Emphasis in the original. Jervis makes a very similar point. Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, 224.

and examine the resultant U.S. decision-making and consequences. The first case study will demonstrate how a particular motivated bias led then-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger unintentionally to help turn Asad from a wartime loser into an intransigent cease-fire winner. Chapter Three will present a number of widely held preconceptions about the use of terrorism in the shadow of the Oslo Accords, then show how these preconceptions are the products of the avoidance of nuance as well as a mix of motivated and unmotivated biases. The chapter will conclude with a re-examination of Hamas's historical use of terror based upon alternative assumptions that strongly suggest that such violence is not necessarily intended to "torpedo the peace process," and that, in turn, lead to policy options for possibly influencing the pattern of terror in the future. Chapter Four will evaluate the gross differences in perception of American deterrent messages by both the senders and receivers of those messages that ultimately led to the deterrence failure on September 11. Chapter Five will conclude with the examination and recommendation of more specific policy options for the near- and long-term, with a particular emphasis on meeting America's stated policy objective of deterring future terrorism.

The cases were chosen for their intrinsic importance and policy relevance – one addresses U.S. dealings with a long-time state sponsor of terror, while the others concern U.S. policies toward specific, still-active terrorist groups – and for their heretofore unsatisfactory practical and theoretical explanations. Together, these cases demonstrate how psychological biases and a lack of proper placement of regional actors have harmed U.S. long-term interests with consequent, substantial loss of life. This is not to be hindsight-based speculation and Monday-morning quarterbacking, though it certainly is far easier to second-guess foreign policy decision-making once history has provided the analyst with a degree of perspective than it was to make those decisions in the first place. Undoubtedly, all those involved were acting in what they perceived to be their respective best interests. Nevertheless, we hope to provide concrete examples of cases where

awareness of preconceptions and psychological biases and employment of the placement methodology of Neustadt and May might have led to different, and even better sets of decisions. It is by design that more questions are raised here than are answered. Woven throughout the case studies are alternative placements of the main actors, and a presentation of the related policy options that might have been available and known to U.S. decision-makers if they had access to similar analysis. In other words, assumptions are both challenged and re-developed for the tasks at hand. Our approach to the case studies is summarized in the table below.

Methodology	Historical Examples	Analysis and Decision-Making ⇒	Outcomes
Current	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syria, 1973 • Hamas & PNA, 1993- • Al-Qa'idah, 1990s 	Ethnocentric, psychologically biased	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syrian-sponsored terrorism; validation of hard-line approach • Hamas/PNA terrorism collaboration • Increasingly bold and costly anti-US attacks
Placement, counter-bias measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Al-Qa'idah, 2001- 	Informed by the history of antagonists, psychological self-awareness, consideration of antagonists' psychological biases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy-makers will have an expanded and improved tool set to analyze, predict and possibly prevent future attacks

It is important to point out here that our focus is on policy-makers rather than on analysts, and for several reasons. First, intelligence analysis tends to be either classified or unpublished. Second, the connection between analysis (good or bad) and decision-making is not at all obvious. Indeed, given the multitude of domestic and international factors that influence executive decision-making, one

may have nothing to do with the other.⁴⁷ Finally, the ultimate decisions of policy-makers are what truly matter. Our concern is with real American action and inaction and how to improve the decision-making behind them.

Reducing the Distortions

How will the case study analyses reduce the effects of the biases noted above and discussed in detail in the following chapters? There are two primary means for doing so. The first, discussed throughout this chapter, relates to broader consideration of the foreign actor's context (that is, using placement where it has not been used before), while the second has to do with explicit and implicit recognition of our own. It has been observed that there are four main theoretical traditions in the social sciences that roughly adhere to units and types of analysis – rational actor/individual; institutional; cultural; and historical. While Neustadt and May focus on the latter only, the analysis proposed here will go beyond the use of history (though this can be an all-inclusive term, to be sure), blurring these unsatisfying theoretical lines, and making use of elements from all four interrelated traditions and a multitude of diverse sources to enrich and/or question the heretofore held understandings of the actors being studied.

It is conceivable, even likely, for example, that once an analyst has a greater understanding of the foreign actor's historical, cultural and institutional background, s/he will be in a much better position to understand the actor's perceived interests, which in turn allows for the creation of potentially powerful rational actor models. Beforehand such models would have been based on biased assumptions or else would have been impossible to create at all due to the perceived "irrationality" of the subjects. This study, then, does not reflect a rejection of the social scientific theories that have proven problematic in the context of Islamism. On the contrary, it seeks to augment and improve them in

⁴⁷ For a discussion of the gaps between analysis and decision-making, see Treverton, *Reshaping*

the hopes that their refinement will provide meaningful explanatory power in this realm as well.

Robert H. Bates and colleagues refer to the combination of historical narrative and social science theory as “Analytic Narrative.” This methodology lends itself to policy analysis quite well in that “... the chapters in [Analytic Narratives] are problem driven, not theory driven; they are motivated by a desire to account for particular events or outcomes. They are devoted to the exploration of cases, not to the elaboration of theory.... Although informed by deductive reasoning, the chapters themselves seek no universal laws of human behavior.”⁴⁸

The goal here, then, is decidedly not to create anything like an operational code for Islamists. Operational codes can be overly comprehensive in their efforts to produce a behavioral guidebook and at the same time overly narrow in their focus on a specific actor or body of actors detached from a specific historical event or problem. To avoid these pitfalls, we will examine specific cases in which Islamists have played a role and in which understanding discrete elements of their behavior (as opposed to the general “rules” of an operational code) are helpful in addressing the problems at hand.⁴⁹

Aside from being problem driven, another advantage of this approach is that arguments can be evaluated with some scientific rigor. Specifically, Bates et al. posit five questions that can be asked of each case study: 1) Do the assumptions fit the facts, as they are known? 2) Do conclusions follow from premises? 3) Do its implications find confirmation in the data? 4) How well does the theory stand

National Intelligence, 177-215.

⁴⁸ Robert H. Bates, et al, *Analytic Narratives* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 11.

⁴⁹ Alexander L. George points out that operational codes were not designed to “provide a simple key to explanation and prediction,” but could help in “bounding” the alternative perceptions and courses of action open to the foreign actor. Alexander L. George, “The ‘Operational Code’: A

up by comparison with other explanations? and 5) How general is the explanation? Does it apply to other cases?⁵⁰ We believe that the case study analyses in the chapters that follow provide satisfactory answers to these important questions, answers which also serve as a control against the wholesale tossing about of social psychological theories as a tool for explaining almost anything away. That is, the usefulness of such theories in creating alternative models is dependent on their positive contribution to the explanatory power of those new models.

As we discussed above, it undoubtedly is the case that our own understandings of history, culture and institutions – foreign or domestic – are colored by who we are. While it is impossible to divorce ourselves from our context, recognizing this fact also will improve our analysis. The case studies will include examples where even a modest degree of self-placement might have led the actors to make different, better decisions. The psychology literature is explicit in noting that human beings will never be able to eliminate the underlying mental mechanisms that lead to distorted perception, many of which have positive cognitive effects as well. There is, however, a two-part strategy for limiting the effects of the motivated and unmotivated biases that threaten our perception. First, awareness of the biases and their effects (i.e., a kind of self-placement) can itself inspire auto-corrective behavior. Second, with this psychological self-awareness it becomes easier to consider a wider range of alternative assumptions and explanations related to a given issue, which is a critical element of the analytic narrative methodology.⁵¹ Epistemologically speaking, this approach is consistent

Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making," *International Studies Quarterly* 13.2 (June 1969): 200.

⁵⁰ Bates et al, *Analytic Narratives*, 14-18. The authors are explicit in recognizing that their methodology is not immune to the problems often associated with the generalizability of case study research. *Ibid.*, 232-6.

⁵¹ Gilovich, *How We Know What Isn't So*, 185-8; Nisbett and Ross, *Human Inference*, 293. This is consistent with Heuer's Analysis of Competing Hypotheses (ACH) methodology and with the multiple-model approach described by Paul K. Davis and John Arquilla (discussed further in the

with Lakatos's idea of testing alternative hypotheses rather than simply trying to falsify the one currently prevailing,⁵² and it has already proved useful in other studies of foreign policy.⁵³

The utility of psychological self-awareness does not stop with ourselves, however. Further intertwining the placement and psychological approaches is the need to apply the insights gained from social psychology not just to understanding our own perceptions, but to understanding the perceptions of foreign actors as well. That is, placement must take into consideration not just the historical and cultural, but also the psychological context of those being studied. They too bear the burden of motivated and unmotivated biases, and it is crucial to factor that into our analysis. This point is most dramatically evident in the discussion of deterring terrorists in Chapters Four and Five, but informs the other case studies as well.

We believe that our use of placement and multiple or alternative models in the case studies successfully fills some of the gaps left in the literature that deals with those cases.⁵⁴ That said, a word of methodological humility and consistency is in order here. The psychological explanations offered here for analytic and decision-making failings and the alternative models so implied are not the only ones possible. It is entirely likely that other, as yet undiscovered, alternative

chapters below). Heuer, *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis*, 95-109; Paul K. Davis and John Arquilla, *Thinking about Opponent Behavior in Crisis and Conflict: A Generic Model for Analysis and Group Discussion* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1991), 6-8.

⁵² Imre Lakatos, "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes," *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave, eds. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 91-196.

⁵³ Larson, *Origins of Containment*, 25.

⁵⁴ Bruce W. Jentleson points out that there have been problematically few academic publications addressing policy-relevant aspects of terrorism and counter-terrorism. Specifically, he identified only four such books from academic presses in the five years before 2002 and only seven related doctoral dissertations completed during the period 1998-2001. Bruce W. Jentleson, "The Need for Praxis," *International Security* 26.4 (Spring 2002): 171-2.

hypotheses will, in time, complement or supersede the conclusions of this study. It is our deepest hope that the following chapters will catalyze the development of such alternatives on the road to more useful, sound and successful models of counter-terrorism policy-making.

CHAPTER TWO

PRINCIPLE, PRACTICALITY AND POLICY-MAKING IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE 1973 ARAB-ISRAELI WAR

Introduction

In this first case study, the subject is related only tangentially to Islam and terrorism. The case is instructive as an example of a complex foreign policy issue where, despite an acute awareness of locally relevant factors, a particular psychological bias appears to have impeded the consideration of possible alternative outcomes and related negotiation strategies that might have yielded more positive results for the United States. Deft dealing with the late Hafiz al-Asad of Syria required a great deal of insight into a daunting combination of issues: the roles of the superpowers, war, peace, terrorism, religion, secularism, nationalism, the status of minorities, as well as short and long term objectives, to give but a partial list. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger demonstrated an impressive command of these issues, but his approach to the negotiations appears to have reflected the distorting influence of the psychological bias, leading to results quite different than those he had hoped to achieve in his dealings with Asad in 1973 and 1974.

It is the natural and justifiable tendency of political scientists and historians writing on various epochs to utilize instances of major armed conflict as convenient markers to divide up their narrative. As the Middle East has traditionally been – for a variety of geographic, strategic, religious and economic reasons – an exceptionally “fertile” breeding ground of conflict, the history of this region especially lends itself to such demarcation. The many upheavals and vicissitudes that have characterized the region in recent generations make the twentieth, and now the twenty-first, centuries no exception to this rule. Specifically, Arab-Israeli history invariably is presented as a series of wars, each of which effects major changes in the course of events. While this presentation makes sense, it is important to recall that the aftereffects of hostilities are of

various types. Sometimes the shifts are obvious: one need only compare maps from June 4, 1967 to those amended after June 11. The massive territorial redistribution is immediately apparent.

The aftermath of the Arab-Israeli War of 1973 (also known as the Yom Kippur War, the October War and the Ramadan War) provides an example of a different category of war-created metamorphosis. Scrutinizing maps from before the war and following the signing of the separation of forces agreements, what is most evident is the similarity between them, especially as concerns the Syrian-Israeli border. While having resulted in far less territorial change than its 1967 predecessor, the October War nonetheless resulted in significant political change on the Arab-Israeli front and on the Arab-Arab front. The domestic situation of each of the participant states influenced the prosecution of the war and the way in which it was concluded. This relationship was two-sided, as the domestic situation itself was also heavily influenced by the war's outcome. Some of these results can be traced to the designs and plans of specific leading players; others appear to have been unexpected, arising from the various dynamics of the war, the labyrinth of regional politics and the influence of the superpowers. In this chapter, we will examine Kissinger's goals and assumptions in his efforts to negotiate an end to the October War, particularly as pertains to the Israeli-Syrian front.

It is our belief that Kissinger's expectations about Syrian President Asad's future behavior were, in fact, colored by a motivated bias, and, as a result, led the former to adopt an overly tolerant posture vis-à-vis his Syrian interlocutor. We will illustrate our argument by discussing some of the psychological factors that appear to have been at work here, by offering alternative assumptions and by placing Asad ourselves in light of these alternatives. We shall analyze what Asad hoped to achieve by going to war, and the extent to which he was

successful in meeting and even surpassing his goals, in part as a result of Kissinger's approach to the situation.

We shall rely on Kissinger's memoirs and secondary sources, both of which provide rich descriptions of Kissinger's shuttles in the final months of 1973 and the first half of 1974. The memoirs are a particularly valuable resource in that Kissinger often shares the assumptions, goals and thought processes that informed his behavior when dealing with the parties to the conflict. It should be pointed out at the onset that Kissinger's managing of the negotiations is but one of many independent variables that influenced the negotiations' outcome. The focus here is on but one important aspect of what was an extraordinarily complex process.

Kissinger's Shuttle

Among the many differences between the Syrian and Egyptian negotiations were those countries' very different histories and cultures, roles in regional politics and relative political stability, as well as the difference between their territorial dispositions after the October War. These factors influenced the two countries' approach to negotiations, and Kissinger's attempts to mediate. Asad's biographer, Patrick Seale, and others argue that Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat's main goal in going to war was to jump-start his stalled diplomatic efforts toward making peace with Israel.¹ Egypt was joined by Jordan in participating in the December 1973 Geneva Peace Conference while Asad stayed home, taking a much harder line. Asad's ultimate October War "triumph" was not purely the result of his army's efforts. Rather, it was the payoff of a combined military and diplomatic assault.

¹Seale, *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co., Ltd., 1988), 197; Ma'oz, *Asad: The Sphinx of Damascus* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1988), 90. The early Egyptian overtures are detailed in Henry A. Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979) and in idem, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1982).

The details of the arduous Israeli-Syrian negotiations are well known, and will not be repeated unnecessarily here. More important for the purposes of this essay are the ground rules, which will be described in greater detail below, and according to which these negotiations were conducted. Ground rules in the context of the negotiations are the bounds of the negotiations, the absolute musts and must-nots of the two sides. In retrospect, it appears that these rules were in large part dictated by Syria, and essentially accepted as gospel by Kissinger. In accepting Syrian dictates, we will argue, Kissinger reversed himself on previously stated policy stances, with the result of rewarding the Asad regime for its aggressiveness and lending it previously unknown credibility and standing in the Arab world and abroad. This would not be without cost to the United States in the decades that followed.

Did Syria succeed in recapturing the Golan Heights in 1973? One might think that the answer to this question would be straightforward. It is not. On October 7, the answer might have been affirmative, as by then the Syrian army had made significant territorial gains.² By the time the cease fire was accepted on the 23rd, however, Israel had not only driven the Syrians back behind the "Purple Line," which had separated them since 1967, but had also occupied an enclave along the road leading from the Golan to Damascus, putting the Syrian capital within artillery range.³ At this point it would seem that – territorially speaking – Syria had lost. But, the story does not end with the cease-fire either. Rather, to get the full answer, one must look to the separation of forces agreement, negotiated by Kissinger, and signed on May 31, 1974. According to its terms, Israel withdrew from the additional territory it occupied in October *and* from the area around and including the main Syrian Golan city of Quneitra, which had been occupied in

² Chaim Herzog, *The War of Atonement: October, 1973* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1975) 96-97.

1967. In terms of the total area of the Golan, this may seem inconsequential. However, Moshe Ma'oz makes a compelling argument that in the eyes of the Syrians, the gains made in the early hours of the war combined with the diplomatic redemption of Quneitra made for an important victory. This was symbolized most graphically by the fact that the Syrian flag was raised anew over Quneitra by Asad himself.⁴ This phenomenon also manifested itself on the Israeli-Egyptian front, where Egypt's initial crossing of the Suez Canal, and maintenance of a bridgehead on its eastern side more than outweighed – in Egyptian minds – the Israeli counter-crossing and subsequent defeat of the Third Army.⁵ The Egyptians earned their foothold on the east bank in battle. How is it that the Syrians turned a territorial loss into victory?

Despite the October cease-fire, Syria waged a “war of attrition” against the (largely overextended) Israeli forces beyond the Purple Line until well into the spring of 1974. Against this background, Kissinger offers two somewhat contradictory takes on the desirability of a separation of forces. Reflecting on the outcome of the negotiations in his memoirs, he avers, “...our step-by-step strategy prevailed because in the end all sides – even radical Syria and the Soviet Union – each for its own reasons agreed that the tangled military dispositions inherited from the war were precarious, dangerous, and intolerable.”⁶ Yet, elsewhere in the same volume, he claims that “[n]either the compulsions nor the convictions existed on the Syrian front. Both Syria and Israel – certainly Israel – considered the military situation quite tolerable.”⁷ Ultimately, it appears that what motivated Kissinger’s efforts more than the situation on the ground in the

³ Ibid., 128-143.

⁴ Ma'oz, *Asad*, 96.

⁵ Visitor's to Egypt's war museum note that the October War is presented as nothing short of victory.

⁶ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 747.

⁷ Ibid., 1045.

Golan and beyond was the desire to co-opt the radical Asad into the fold of negotiations for the sake of the nascent Egyptian-Israeli relationship, which had begun to show signs of promise. Kissinger foresaw and discussed the need for eventual, rapid, diplomatic progress as early as 1970, in the context of the Jordanian crisis (so-called "Black September"):

...I observed, "At some point, it will become apparent that time is not working for the Soviets. If they cannot get Arab territory back, the Arabs may well come to us." Therefore, we should not yield to blackmail; we should not be panicked by radical rhetoric; patience could be our weapon. By the same token, once the breakthrough had occurred and the moderate Arabs had turned to us, we had to move decisively to produce diplomatic progress.⁸

In this case, "moving decisively" appears to have included bending over backwards to bring Asad on board. It was clear to Kissinger that Syria was not a friendly state. Syria had severed diplomatic relations with the United States in 1967, had been influential in the establishment of the 1973 oil embargo and had initiated the war against Israel in 1973. At the same time, one of the main themes throughout Kissinger's memoirs is his acute awareness that the United States enjoyed unprecedented power in the Middle East following the wars of 1967 and 1973. Having lost two major wars relying on Soviet ideological, diplomatic and military support, Egypt and Syria were both realizing (Egypt more so) that salvation would not be found in Moscow. With the hostile Soviets and Syrians against the ropes, one might have expected Kissinger to take his own stern advice:

⁸ Kissinger, *The White House Years*, 559.

I had learned in Nixon's first term that one must never relax pressures when the opponent is weakening. The right strategy is to combine two seemingly contradictory courses: to *increase* the pressure and to show a way out of the adversary's growing dilemma.⁹

Asad demanded Israeli withdrawals well beyond the October 6 line from the onset of negotiations, explaining that "beginning talks are a loss to us."¹⁰ To be sure, Kissinger made it clear that Asad's maximalist demands were a non-starter.¹¹ However, he accepted, and came to champion, the notion that Israel should give up something beyond the October 6 line, going so far as to suggest that Israel withdraw from Quneitra,¹² in order to get an agreement – any agreement – with Syria. He explained this stance – seemingly contrary to the increase in pressure on Syria that might have been expected, given his statement above – to the Israelis thus:

What Israel gets out of the Syrian negotiation is to have a radical Arab state sign a document with Israel. It is to remove the pressures on Egypt, which really only Syria can generate.... It gives the moderate Arabs... an opportunity to legitimize their course. And from then on every argument with the Syrians will not be a question of principle but a question of tactics.¹³

⁹ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 526. Emphasis in the original.

¹⁰ Ibid., 784.

¹¹ Ibid., 958.

¹² Kissinger takes credit for suggesting the parameters of the withdrawal to the Israelis, which were ultimately very close to those agreed upon: "I said briefly that in my estimate the final disengagement line would have to involve pulling back some two to four kilometers *west* of the prewar line and would have to return the town of Quneitra (held since 1967) to Syria." Ibid., 965. Emphasis in the original.

¹³ Ibid., 963-4.

It appears, then, that Kissinger felt forced to decide between the opportunity to advance the Egyptian track or risk its collapse by turning the screws on the Syrians. The crucial question here is whether these two tasks were in fact mutually exclusive, as presumed by Kissinger, or if he could have at once rewarded the Egyptians for their diplomatic overtures while punishing the Syrians for their ongoing belligerence. We posit that in believing that Asad's participation in negotiations was *necessarily* a matter of principle rather than one of mere practicality, Kissinger fell victim to a specific type of psychological bias, which Paul K. Davis and John Arquilla have aptly termed "the tyranny of the best estimate," and which they introduced in their analysis of another regional dictator, Saddam Hussein.¹⁴ That is, what Kissinger believed an agreement with Syria would have to mean *to the Syrians* was not only just one possible outcome (as we shall see, his prediction was not borne out by events), but it was the one that was most favorable to his own position. Davis and Arquilla's remedy to this bias is to create multiple models of possible antagonist behavior. As noted in Chapter One, many counter-bias strategies begin with recognizing that biases exist and are at work. This self-awareness then facilitates the development of previously unentertained perspectives (i.e., multiple models). Here, as in the Davis and Arquilla study, the admittedly non-instinctive act of considering alternative scenarios might have led Kissinger to act – in this case, mediate the negotiations – differently.

Placing President Asad – Why Did He Choose War?

While a full, formal placement of Asad might begin with his birth to an 'Alawite family near Latakia, it is more appropriate here to begin with the most germane features of his and his country's intertwined histories that formed the context of his choice to go to war. Asad assumed absolute leadership in Syria in mid-

¹⁴ Paul K. Davis and John Arquilla, *Deterring or Coercing Opponents in Crisis: Lessons from the War with Saddam Hussein* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1991), 2. This bias is discussed further in Chapter Five.

November, 1970.¹⁵ He inherited a Syria largely isolated from the rest of the Arab world, due to the radical, ideological policies of his ousted predecessor Salah Jadid.¹⁶ Six weeks before the "Corrective Revolution" that brought Asad to power, the Arab world suffered the loss of its most outspoken and charismatic nationalist leader, Gamal `Abd al-Nasser. The Egyptian president's death left a power vacuum that both Sadat and Asad were eager to fill. While it is highly questionable whether a relatively young man like Asad – at the helm of a politically outcast Syria – could fill Nasser's large shoes, at a minimum he took advantage of the circumstances to bring Syria back into the fold of inter-Arab politics. Just ten days after taking power, Asad flew to Cairo to meet with his Egyptian counterpart, and to announce Syria's intention to join the Federation of Arab Republics. This was followed by the rapid restoration and improvement of relations with other Arab countries.¹⁷

At the same time, Asad could not ignore the economic, sectarian and religious issues that threatened to undermine his hold on power at home. Thus, he set out on an ambitious plan to reform the Syrian economy, while placating and – perhaps more often – suppressing domestic opposition.¹⁸ That Asad would want to stabilize his country in order to consolidate his rule is certainly understandable. But what drove him to act so quickly and urgently in repairing Syria's damaged relations with the other states of the region? The answer should be sought in the labyrinth of Arab international relations between the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973.

¹⁵ The sources vary as to the exact date of Asad's taking power. All agree that it was between the 12th and 16th of November.

¹⁶ Ma'oz, *Asad*, 37-40.

¹⁷ Patrick Seale, *Asad*, 186; Moshe Ma'oz, *Syria under Hafiz al-Asad: New Domestic and Foreign Policies*, Jerusalem Papers on Peace Problems 15 (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, The Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, 1975), 12-13.

¹⁸ Ma'oz, *Asad*, 74-82; idem, *Syria*, 11-12.

The 1967 war left a particularly painful legacy to the defeated Arab states that participated in it. A common goal was newly discernible in the minds of the rulers of these states, clearer in its outlines than the general concept of “enmity to Israel” that preceded the war. The idea that the territories lost to Israel must be recovered by force became the overt position of leaders throughout the Middle East after 1967.¹⁹ Asad was – at least in his own mind – the leading proponent of this approach. This is in line with the position adopted by both the Ba’th regime²⁰ and Nasser as early as the summer of 1967.²¹ Indeed, it appears that this need to retrieve their lost possessions was stronger even than any sobering deterrent effect that the 1967 defeat might have carried with it.²²

As Yair Evron points out, there appears to have developed, then, interests unique to each of the states that lost territory in 1967, bound together by the common denominator of their territorial grievances. Practically speaking, the leaders’ desire to reverse the results of the 1967 war allowed them to put many of their other differences aside and focus on their common goal: “All other foreign policy objectives assumed lower priority compared with that one [the political and military campaign against Israel].”²³ Asad himself articulated this concept at the Ba’th congress of March, 1969:

¹⁹ Behind the scenes, Egypt and, to a lesser extent, Jordan were also beginning to investigate diplomatic routes.

²⁰ Itamar Rabinovich, "Continuity and Change in the Ba’th Regime in Syria," *From June to October: The Middle East between 1967 and 1973*, eds. Itamar Rabinovich and Haim Shaked (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1978), 225.

²¹ Al-Haytham al-Ayoubi, "The Strategies of the Fourth Campaign," trans. Edmund Ghareeb, *Middle East Crucible: Studies on the Arab-Israeli War of October 1973*, AAUG Monograph Series: No. 6, ed. Naseer H. Aruri (Wilmette, IL: The Medina University Press International, 1975), 81.

²² Yair Evron, "Two Periods in the Arab-Israeli Strategic Relations 1957-1967; 1967-1973," *From June to October*, 109.

²³ Ibid.; This phenomenon is also noted in Rabinovich, "Continuity and Change," 226.

I have repeatedly stressed the importance of Arab military coordination – notably among the Arab states which border with Israel – regardless of the differences and the contradictions in their political positions, as long as it would serve the armed struggle....²⁴

Hence, the unity among the Arab states inspired by the 1967 war lasted well after its six days had passed. In fact, this unity proved strong enough to last until – and even facilitate the execution of – the October War six years later.

We can conclude that Asad's aforementioned efforts to reconcile Syria rapidly with other members of the Arab world following his accession to power, coupled with his tightening of relations with the Soviet Union were largely, though by no means exclusively, intended for the purpose of preparing for the next war with Israel. This war would allow the Arabs as a whole to regain what had been lost, and specifically allow Asad to reclaim the Golan Heights for Syria. Further, we can conclude, from both his words and his actions, that from an early stage, Asad saw war as the best, if not the only, means to achieve this goal.²⁵ Undoubtedly contributing to Asad's commitment to war was the symbiotic relationship between war and both national and inter-Arab unity. Having established what is, in fact, a fairly obvious reason for going to war in 1973 (i.e., territorial redemption), we shall now examine other, perhaps more ideological motives that guided the president down the road to battle.

It is, of course, impossible to quantitatively measure to what degree any motive – or group of motives – influenced a historical protagonist to act in one way or another. That said, it does seem to be the case that the above-mentioned desire to reverse the results of the 1967 war was primarily what moved Asad to opt for

²⁴ Quoted in Ma'oz, *Asad*, 38.

war in 1973. Secondary literature on the war, on Syria and on Asad invariably focuses mainly on this line of reasoning and, more often than not, presents it as almost axiomatic. However, some of these sources also posit a number of other, important driving forces, albeit in a more cursory manner.

Included among these reasons are Syrian popular and ideological identification with the Palestinians and their ongoing struggle with Israel;²⁶ a sense of damaged Pan-Arab, Syrian and personal pride – a particularly sensitive issue with Ba'thist Asad;²⁷ and the general, widely-held view that Zionism was nothing less than the antithesis of independent Arab political and cultural existence.²⁸

Finally, war would provide Asad with a medium to prove his commitment to Islam. Constantly aware of his 'Alawite minority status amongst Syria's Sunni majority, he took steps from an early stage to demonstrate that his being an 'Alawite did not make him an apostate.²⁹ Ma'oz lists a number of gestures made by Asad prior to the war, including the reformulation of the constitution to stipulate that the president must be a Muslim, the restoration of the presidential oath to include swearing by "Allahu Akbar,"³⁰ his praying in public, an interview in which he "expressed his belief in Islam, which he views as the religion of love

²⁵ There has been some debate as to exactly when Asad decided to go to war. This, however, is irrelevant in the context of this essay. While the timing is, of course, important, we will focus on the question of "why," rather than "when."

²⁶ Seale, *Asad*, 185-186; John Bulloch, preface, *The Making of a War: The Middle East from 1967 to 1973* (London: Longman Group, Ltd., 1974), xv.

²⁷ Seale, *Asad*, 185-186; Ma'oz, *Asad*, 84.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 85.

²⁹ The 'Alawis are a sect related to a branch of Shi'ism. Though some of their practices and beliefs are quite distinct from those of mainstream Sunni or Shi'ite Islam, some 'Alawis have gone to great lengths to acquire a measure of Islamic sanction. 'Alawis make up approximately 6% of the Syrian population. Cyril Glassé, "'Alawi," *The Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam* (London: Stacey International, 1989), 30-1

³⁰ This is reminiscent of Saddam Hussein's adding of the same affirmation, which means "God is Greatest," to the Iraqi flag prior to the Gulf War.

and justice," and, perhaps most significantly, having his "authenticity" as a Muslim verified by both Sunni and Shi'i leaders.³¹

It is clear that Asad had both practical/immediate and ideological/long-term factors influencing his choice to go to war. None of these were secret, and it appears that Kissinger was aware of most of them at the time of his dealings with the Syrian president. It should be noted that Asad's motivation was similar to Sadat's insofar as neither thought that the war would bring about the destruction of Israel. Both had more modest short-term goals. Where these goals differed, however, is that Sadat had hoped that the war (specifically, the establishment of an Egyptian presence on the east bank of the Suez Canal) would drive a diplomatic process that he had initiated before the war. Asad entertained no such diplomatic desire.

Convinced that any Syrian agreement would indicate a fundamental about-face and clearly recognizing that Asad had major concerns about his regime's stability, Kissinger went to great lengths to allow Asad to strike a deal without undermining his position at home. Further, Kissinger understood very well the importance of territorial gains in driving Asad back to war. Consideration of alternative, though less favorable, motives behind a Syrian agreement – namely, that agreement was simply a way to make gains not made on the battlefield rather than an indication (however small) of Syrian acceptance of Israel – might have prompted Kissinger to reconsider the combination of factors lined up against Asad – being a member of a socio-religious minority, the fractious history of Syrian politics, his major roles in two failed wars that left thousands of Syrians dead or wounded – as well as the regime's seemingly implacable hostility towards Israel, and, consistent with his own stated beliefs, conclude that perhaps

³¹ Ma'oz, *Syria*, 10-11; idem, *Asad*, 151.

this was precisely the time to pressure, rather than placate, Asad.³² In the context of the negotiations, Kissinger does mention that the Syrian military leadership – the source of a likely successor to Asad, had he fallen from power – was more moderate than its ideologically charged, civilian counterpart.³³ This important fact appears to have been largely passed over as irrelevant, given the lofty expectations associated with what might be called the “Asad option.”

Finally, Kissinger might have observed that while Asad and Sadat had colluded for the purposes of war, they were in fact both vying for leadership of the post-Nasser Middle East. Their rivalry was made worse by the fact that Asad thought Sadat had betrayed him by not driving his forces further into the Sinai, which allowed the Israelis to divert their attention to Syria.³⁴ Expectations of Syrian support for Egyptian peace moves and leadership would prove to be unrealistic in the extreme. We shall return to the long-term implications of Kissinger’s policy choice below.

The War’s Immediate Results

It is extremely difficult to know exactly which of the war’s results were planned – or at least hoped for – by Asad before the fighting, and which were the products of unexpected turns in the process of physical and verbal combat. The best we can do is make an educated guess based on his statements and behavioral trends in the period between his assumption of power and the war’s conclusion. It appears likely that the October War bore fruit for President Asad that he may not have known grew on the battlefield or in the negotiating room.

³² It is also worth noting that Nasser’s fall from grace followed his defeat in 1967.

³³ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 780.

³⁴ Egyptian forces had stopped advancing after establishing their foothold on the east side of the Suez Canal. It was felt that this was all that was needed to give the Egyptians the diplomatic leverage they sought. Further, it represented the extent of the Egyptians’ surface-to-air missile coverage. After Syrian pleading, the Egyptians did advance a bit further, with disastrous effect. Herzog, *War of Atonement*, 135, 205-7; Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 459-61.

We noted above the territorial disposition of forces that obtained at the end of the fighting in October. What about Asad's ideological war goals? The October War did not solve the Palestinian problem. Even to the extent that it can be argued that the war led ultimately to peace negotiations between Israel and Egypt, it is significant that Israel's eventual withdrawal from Sinai left Gaza's residents "forgotten" under Israeli rule. Further, the words "Palestine" and "withdrawal" were conspicuously absent from U.N. Security Council resolution 338, which formed the diplomatic basis for the war's end.³⁵ Nor did the war destroy Israel, the existence of which Asad had categorically stated to be the antithesis of Arab well-being. As noted above, Asad and Arab military commanders did not even consider this to be a military objective. Thus, Asad's ideological rejection of, and desire to eradicate Zionism was not – indeed, could not have been – satisfied by the hostilities' outcome.

On the surface, it would appear that, save for the territorial gains brought by negotiation, the war failed in every respect. Or did it?

The Implications for Asad, the Middle East and the United States

Victory, it would seem, is largely in the eye of the beholder. While not ejecting Israeli forces from all of the Golan, Asad did succeed in bringing home the *image* of a winner. The victorious image brought home by the Syrians, and to a lesser extent the Egyptians, worked wonders in repairing the damaged pride of the Arabs as a whole, and of the individual participant states. That Jordan, Iraq, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and other Arab states participated in the war – directly or

³⁵ Seale, *Asad*, 221. Syria begrudgingly accepted resolution 338 months after its passing.

indirectly – only added to the Pan-Arab flavor of the war effort, especially as this came after the lull in Pan-Arabism that followed the 1967 debacle.³⁶

Asad's balance between physical and political combat, and the willingness of Kissinger to play along, is ultimately what brought Quneitra – and honor – back to Syria.³⁷ Asad was to employ this two-track method – a pen in one hand and a gun in the other – in his government's relations with other states often in the decades that followed the war, most notably vis-à-vis Israel in Lebanon. It has been argued that no leader in the modern Middle East has better proved Clausewitz's notion that "war is an extension of politics by other means,"³⁸ though it just as often appeared as if Asad viewed diplomacy as war conducted by other means – another theme that we shall return to in the chapters that follow. Asad's stubborn approach, and the perception of his having stood fast in the face of Israel and the United States earned him newfound respect as the leader of the Arab struggle against Israel. In this sense, he did indeed take over where Nasser had left off. This respect emanated from the other states in the region and from the superpowers themselves.³⁹

Kissinger had hoped to bring Syria into the fold of U.S. influence, drawing it away from the Soviet Union, and count it among the states building relations with Israel. At a minimum, he wanted to prevent the scuttling of the Israeli-Egyptian dialogue. This latter just barely was achieved. Egypt did eventually make peace with Israel. However, with strong Syrian influence, Egypt was completely ostracized in the Arab world and humiliated by being kicked out of the League of Arab States. President Sadat ultimately was assassinated by

³⁶ Daniel Dishon, "Inter-Arab Relations," *From June to October*, 164-165; Hani A. Faris and As'ad Abdul Rahman, "Arab Unity," *Middle East Crucible*, 115.

³⁷ Ma'oz, *Syria*, 13, 14-17.

³⁸ Al-Ayoubi, "Strategies of the Fourth Campaign," 82.

³⁹ Ma'oz, *Syria*, 96-7.

Egyptian militants who opposed, among other things, his dealings with Israel.⁴⁰

Contrary to Kissinger's belief,⁴¹ signing the agreement with Syria did not do much to "legitimize the course" of moderate Arab action.

The victory that Kissinger helped grant to Asad did not lead to a warming of relations between Syria and Israel either. On the contrary, it served to galvanize Asad's position as a hard-line leader of those opposed to any normalization with Israel. Itamar Rabinovich points out that the disengagement agreement that Kissinger spent so much time and effort crafting was, in fact, never signed by Syria. Instead, the Syrians authorized an Egyptian general to sign for them.⁴² Indeed, until his death in the spring of 2000, Asad never deigned to speak directly to an Israeli leader. More than twenty-eight years after the October War, peace between these two rivals remains elusive. Kissinger's claim that arguments with the Syrians "will not be a question of principle but a question of tactics" seems to have been rather off the mark. Once the Syrians had turned their defeat into victory, their utility from the even indirect engagement with Israel dropped to near zero. Syrian principles remained unassailable, perhaps until 18 years later, when the Madrid Conference was convened.⁴³

As to drawing Syria away from the Soviets and into the American sphere of influence, in the years following the war Syria, whose Ba'athist regime remained committed to Soviet-style command socialism and military doctrine, received unprecedented amounts of economic and military aid from the Soviet Union,⁴⁴ which continued to flow until the latter's collapse in 1989. Further, the

⁴⁰ Notably, Sadat was assassinated while reviewing a military parade on October 6, to commemorate the Egyptian victory in 1973.

⁴¹ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 964.

⁴² Itamar Rabinovich, *The Brink of Peace* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 28.

⁴³ As of this writing, Syrian-Israeli negotiations have been indefinitely suspended.

⁴⁴ Ma'oz, *Syria*, 14, 24.

emboldened, radical Syria championed anti-American causes in the Middle East, sponsoring Palestinian and Lebanese terrorist groups that attacked American targets. Among these is Hizballah, which is responsible for the October 1983 bombings of the U.S. embassy and U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut that together left over 300 Americans dead, and for the kidnapping of Americans in Lebanon throughout the 1980s. Syria remains one of seven countries on the Department of State's list of states that sponsor terrorism, playing host to Hizballah, which Syria continues to use instrumentally to pressure Israel, as well as to the ten Palestinian groups known collectively as the "Rejection Front," which oppose violently any Israeli-Palestinian rapprochement.⁴⁵

Aside from emerging an important regional power, and no less significantly for Asad, he had also earned the respect of his own citizens. In the three-and-a-half years between Asad's rise to power and the concluding of the May 1974 agreement, he succeeded in dramatically changing both his personal stature and that of Syria in the Middle East. If he was not the same fiery motivator that Nasser was, nevertheless in the eyes of the Syrian people Asad proved himself the worthiest candidate to succeed the Egyptian leader. He achieved this domestic image improvement by taking steps to end Syria's isolation under the Jadid regime, and by taking the lead in the military and diplomatic struggle against Israel.⁴⁶

Bolstering this position, the war afforded Asad an invaluable opportunity to cultivate his image as a Muslim leader. The *Ramadan War* was clothed in an Islamic context, presented as a *jihad*. Asad spoke of his army as the "soldiers of

⁴⁵ It should be noted that while providing them logistic and other support, Syria is careful not to allow these groups to launch any actions from Syrian territory. Office of the Secretary of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2001* (Washington DC: U.S. Department of State, 2002), Internet:

<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2001/html/10249.htm>.

⁴⁶ Ma'oz, *Syria*, 13-14; idem, *Asad*, 96-97.

Allah," and their battle as the battle of al-Badr – referring to the early Islamic battle waged by Muhammad against the Meccan unbelievers in the month of Ramadan, 624 CE.⁴⁷ By presenting himself as a Muslim leading his army against the Zionists, Asad succeeded in stripping his domestic Sunni opponents of much of their oppositional power. After the war, having brought home what many Syrians considered a victory, could Asad be accused of infidelity to the Islamic cause? The Islamic edge added to the war provided the majority of the Syrian public with yet another reason to unite around Asad. His efforts to garner domestic support before, during and after the war unquestionably were successful. While there continued to be some domestic antagonism to the regime, it was not until 1976 that Islamic opposition in Syria again became a factor with which Asad was forced to contend in a serious manner.⁴⁸

Asad, then, emerged from the October War stronger than ever before. The war provided him with a proving ground for both military and political leadership, and he rose to the challenge. That he was able to turn what was in many ways a crushing military defeat – ending with Damascus in range of Israeli artillery – into a political windfall and domestically-accepted victory attests both to his fortitude as a statesman, and to the credit, and ultimately, stature that Kissinger bestowed upon him. Asad took a huge gamble in going to war in 1973. Ma'oz goes so far as to speculate that he risked an Israeli nuclear response.⁴⁹ In this respect, it would seem that his battle cry of "Martyrdom or victory!" was as relevant to himself as it was to the simple Syrian soldier.⁵⁰ In the last analysis, he came out of the war with victory well in hand. Nothing furnishes better evidence of this than the fact that following decades of Syrian weakness and

⁴⁷ Ibid., 93.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 83; 151-152.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 90-91.

⁵⁰ Interestingly, this cry was made again by al-Qa'idah forces near Tora Bora, Afghanistan as allied forces closed in on them.

instability – there were a dozen violent regime changes in Syria between 1945 and 1970⁵¹ – he remained in power, ruling over a strong, comparatively stable Syria until his death more than 26 years after “correctively” ousting Salah Jadid.

With the multitude of factors that influence decision making in the strife-torn Middle East – competing religions, nationalisms, economic ideologies and claims to scarce natural resources, to name but a few – it should be clear that Kissinger’s handling of the disengagement negotiations was only one of many factors that influenced the war’s outcomes. One can only speculate how these outcomes might have changed if Kissinger had increased pressure on Syria. Would the next war have come sooner or not at all?⁵² Would Asad have lost power? Who would have replaced him? Would the (even imperfect) peace between Egypt and Israel been possible? Even with the benefit of hindsight it is impossible to definitively answer these questions. Two things are clear, however: Kissinger’s confident prediction of a Syrian slippery slope of reconciliation did not come to pass, and rather than legitimize the moderates through his participation, Asad’s post-negotiation enhanced status validated the approach of regional hard-liners.

Of course, even counter-bias strategies would not have provided Kissinger with a crystal ball allowing him to see the future of the Middle East. The implication here is not that Kissinger should have been any better at prediction. However, if the assumptions he details in his memoirs are a guide to his decision-making, it is safe to say that he could have benefited greatly from considering alternative motives behind Asad’s participation in the negotiations and related alternative possible outcomes, which could have let him better understand the precariousness of Asad’s position, and his then limited ability to cause regional

⁵¹ Curtis F. Jones, “Governing Syria after Asad,” *American Diplomacy* 5.3 (Summer 2000), Internet: http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/AD_Issues/amdipl_16/jones_asad_prt.html.

⁵² Israel and Syria came to blows again in Lebanon in 1982.

trouble.⁵³ Far from leading or nudging Asad and others down the path toward recognition and reconciliation, by making the negotiations appear to go in Syrian favor, Kissinger did much to reverse Asad's poor fortune and to hearten those who advocated violent opposition to Israel and its United States backer. In so doing, Kissinger unwittingly strengthened a regime hostile to American interests for decades to come.

The passage of time apparently has led Kissinger to come to conclusions similar to those discussed above. Appearing on CNN shortly following the September 11 attacks, Wolf Blitzer asked Kissinger about the message the White House should give Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. His reply suggests a greater degree of skepticism regarding what could be perceived as the rewarding of violence:

I think symbolic meeting between Sharon and Arafat might be very useful. But for Israel to make concessions before a big success has been achieved against terrorism, will enable the terrorists to say that after they bombed New York and killed thousands of people, America exacted concessions which we wouldn't do before and would establish anti-American terrorism as the method for dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict....⁵⁴

⁵³ It bears mentioning that Syria could not have gone to war without Egypt.

⁵⁴ "Special Edition: America's New War; Domestic, International, Military, Economic Impact," *CNN Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer*, CNN, 23 September 2001. Transcript available at Internet: <http://www.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0109/23/le.00.html>. Kissinger made a similar statement following the intense wave of suicide bombings in Israel in the spring of 2002: "It is important for us and it is important for the war against terrorism that the outcome, whatever it is, is not perceived as having been elicited from us by suicide bombing, and that one side has to make the territorial concession and the other side only recognizes that it exists but changes nothing else." "Kissinger: Don't Let Terror Take Credit for Mideast Peace," CNN 5 April 2002, Internet: <http://www.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/meast/04/05/kissinger.mideast/index.html>.

Kissinger's recommendations are all the more poignant given the sentiment of some Egyptians that September 11 was "their happiest moment since the war of 1973."⁵⁵ In the final chapter of this essay, we shall return to what else American decision-makers can do today to ensure that September 11 will not be remembered as a happy moment when hostile parties reflect on it and its implications 28 years from now.

⁵⁵ Daniel Pipes, "A Middle East Party," *Jerusalem Post* 14 September 2001, Internet: <http://www.jpost.com/Editions/2001/09/14/Opinion/Opinion.34829.html>.

CHAPTER THREE

POST-OSLO HAMAS TERRORISM: WYE AND WHY NOT?

Introduction

As this essay is being written, following a recent series of suicide bombings and active shooter attacks, the Israeli government has severed ties with the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), declaring Yasser Arafat to be "irrelevant." Much has changed since the optimistic days of September 1993 when Arafat and then Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin signed their first Declaration of Principles (DOP), which came to be known as the Oslo Accords. Volumes have been written about the ebbs and flows of the Arab-Israeli peace process since the convening of the Madrid Summit in 1991. The peace process is decidedly not a static creature. Some of what is true today was not true yesterday. Tomorrow, it is certain, we will be able to say the same thing. In this chapter, we will examine a fraction of the history of the peace process, paying particular attention to the assumptions that informed the decision-making of the United States, Israel, the PNA and the Islamic Resistance Movement (better known by its acronym, Hamas) as well as the assumptions behind analyses of these actors' behavior. Specifically, we will address commonly held understandings of the relationship between Hamas terrorism and the prosecution of the peace process, starting in 1993. The conventional wisdom, we will argue, is marked by significant inaccuracies that are the result of a mix of shallow understanding of the actors involved and, perhaps more importantly, decision-makers' and analysts' own preconceptions. We will present an examination of the pattern of violence since 1993 and offer an alternative explanation for it, concluding with a theoretical discussion of the implications the alternative explanation carries with it.

The more than eight years since the signing of the Oslo Accords have witnessed the at-times gradual, at-times sudden dissolution of many long-held beliefs, and the crossing of many proverbial red lines. Yet to this day, policy-makers and the

news media alike have held fast to the almost axiomatic idea that the Palestinian Islamist terror movements, especially Hamas, are “the enemies of peace” and have tried time and again to “torpedo the peace process.”¹ This belief has been stated and reaffirmed by all of the major American and Israeli decision-makers associated with the formulation and implementation of the Oslo Accords. Some representative examples:

Leader	Statement
President Bill Clinton	“Terrorists must know that these acts [of terrorism] will not defeat the process that is bringing peace to Israel and its Arab enemies.” ²
Secretary of State Warren Christopher	“I emphasized to the President that, in my view, the sole purpose of this week’s wave of terror by Hamas is to kill the peace process.” ³
Secretary of State Madeline Albright	“Over the years the peace process has been undermined by extremists, assaulted by terrorists, and shocked by assassins.” ⁴
Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin	“...by no means will we allow them [Hamas] to achieve their goal – to interfere with our move towards peace.” ⁵
Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres	“Now, for the first time, we are trying to bring peace, and, at the same time, we have to stop terror from killing the peace.” ⁶

President Clinton turned these words into action when he issued Executive Order 12947, “Prohibiting Transactions With Terrorists Who Threaten To Disrupt the Middle East Peace Process,” which declared a national emergency and

¹ According to this view, Hamas is an outside, total spoiler, using Stephen John Stedman’s typology of peace process spoilers. See, Stephen John Stedman, “Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes,” *International Security* 22.2 (Fall 1997): 5-53.

² Statement, October 14, 1994 in *U.S. Department of State Dispatch* 5.43 (24 October 1994): 712.

³ Remarks at a press conference, Alexandria, Egypt, October 14, 1994 in *ibid.*

⁴ “Remarks at Arab-Israeli Peace Process Signing Ceremony,” Sharm-El-Sheikh, Egypt, September 4, 1999 in *U.S. Department of State Dispatch* 10.7 (August/September 1999): 1.

⁵ “Remarks following meeting [with Secretary of State Christopher] at the Office of the Prime Minister,” Jerusalem, October 10, 1994 in *U.S. Department of State Dispatch* 5.43 (October 24, 1994): 715.

specifically named terrorist groups, including Hamas.⁷ He justified the order thus:

Attempts to disrupt the Middle East peace process through terrorism by groups opposed to peace have threatened and continue to threaten vital interests of the United States, thus constituting an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States.⁸

That this assumption remains in full force is reflected in a recent *Time* article, "Hamas Explained": "Hamas opposed the Oslo peace process from the outset because it involved recognizing Israel's existence, and set about trying sabotaging [sic] that process by sending waves of suicide bombers into Israeli cities in the mid-1990s."⁹ A close examination of peace process progress as well as of Hamas action, however, indicates that this simple black-and-white classification of Hamas obscures nuances in Hamas's goals as well as important conclusions that can be drawn from the frequency of the group's transmission of its "waves."

Peace ≠ Peacemaking

It is not difficult to understand why so many believe in Hamas's purported desire to destroy the agreements that have taken so long and so much effort to craft. Most of the movement's public statements feature language unmistakable

⁶ "Remarks upon arrival of President Clinton, Tel Aviv, Israel," March 13, 1996 in *U.S. Department of State Dispatch* 7.12 (March 18, 1996): 115.

⁷ 3 CFR, 1995 Comp., 319-21.

⁸ "Message to the Congress on Terrorists Who Threaten To Disrupt the Middle East Peace Process," 23 January 1995 in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: William J. Clinton 1995*, Book I (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1996), 75.

⁹ Tony Karon, "Hamas Explained," *Time* 11 December 2001, Internet: <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,188137,00.html>.

for its rejection of reconciliation with the Jews and its endorsement of continued bloodshed in the name of Islam and the ultimate “liberation” of Palestine. For example:

Putting an end to the plotting against the Prophet Muhammad’s point of departure to heaven and against the Muslims’ first holy place is a definite duty of all Muslims in the world. All the Arab and Islamic peoples and movements must proceed immediately to perform their desired and expected role in the decisive fateful battle against Jews, the enemies of God and humanity. Our battle is the battle of the Islamic nation with all its capabilities, resources, and civilization against the Jews with their ambitions and schemes. Our Palestinian people are nothing but the spearhead, backed with inexhaustible support by the Islamic nation and by a tremendous and endless army [to liberate] al-Aqsa.¹⁰

Hamas’s opposition to settlement with the Jews is easily understandable in the context of Islamic faith and history. It is essential to keep in mind that it is contrary to some of the most fundamental beliefs of Islam for Jews to be ruling over Islamic lands, people and holy places. For some believers, the message of Islam as the final word – revealed to supersede Judaism and Christianity – is irreconcilable with the reality on the ground. To make peace with the Jews of Israel would be to second-guess Islam itself. The immovable position implied by this understanding of Islam, and reflected in statements such as the one above, as well as in interviews with and interrogations of members of those Hamas cells responsible for the spate of suicide bombings in recent years, has led many to conclude – correctly – that Hamas does not want peace with Israel.

¹⁰ “Statement for History: ‘No’ to Conference for Selling Palestine and Jerusalem,” *al-Ribat* 24 September 1991, 9 (FBIS-NES-91-201, 17 October 1991, 4). The conference referred to in the title is the Madrid Conference. “Muhammad’s point of departure to heaven” refers to the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem; al-Aqsa is the mosque next to that important and contested site.

There is a crucial difference between peace and peacemaking, though, and this is part of what has sent decision-makers astray. Peace is a goal, an end state.

Peacemaking is a drawn-out process, with dynamics and side effects that have a life and appeal of their own, often with little, no or a contrary relationship to the desired end. Hamas opposes peace. From 1993 to the spring of 1996, we will show, Hamas *loved* the peace process, probably more so than any other interest group. The assumed interchangeability of the terms “peace” and “peace process” is itself the result of a number of problematic assumptions.

To begin with, there is something of a chicken-and-egg question concerning Hamas and the peace process. The Oslo process was designed and pursued by Shimon Peres and others with the specific and explicit goal of combating Islamist extremism. Peres discusses this in the book that presents his vision of the peace process and its hoped-for results, *The New Middle East*:

Thus, economic and social development are the criteria for successful democratization of the Middle East.... The Middle East has tremendous market potential; its buildup constitutes a great challenge, and its success will open up limitless opportunities in the region. Democratization will put an end to the danger to regional and world peace. But for the democratic process to take hold, we must first overcome poverty and ignorance – the cradle of fundamentalism.¹¹

Peres's own Western biases are clearly at work in this excerpt. Explicit in this text is the mistaken assumption that educating Middle Easterners and making them economically prosperous will eliminate religious extremism. While Peres acknowledges the post-Enlightenment heritage informing his thought,¹² he does

¹¹ Shimon Peres, *The New Middle East* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993), 45.

¹² *Ibid.*, 161.

not consider that the data do not support his bold assertion about the inverse relationship between material and educational wellbeing and intensity of religious fervor.¹³ This is not particularly surprising. A brief look into Peres's personal history suggests that his vision for the New Middle East is a reflection of his own life story. Peres was raised very religious in Vishneva, Poland, but became secular through his increasing involvement with a number of Zionist socialist movements, which eventually brought him to mandatory Palestine in 1933 at the age of ten.¹⁴ The idea that development will undermine the appeal of religion has been a defining characteristic of Peres's thinking for around 70 years, and is in many ways the ideological foundation underlying *The New Middle East*.

Making Hamas the peace process' enemy is not the same as making the peace process Hamas's enemy. Peres can control only one side of that equation. Hamas's actions indicate that, in fact, there is an inequality here. The continual striving of Clinton, Christopher, Albright, Rabin and Peres to advance the peace process was driven largely by their belief that Hamas wanted to disrupt it, by their promises not to give in to terror, and by the reality that the Israeli leadership had bet their political futures (in Rabin's case, much more) on the success of negotiation. Ironically, with every terrorist "setback," Rabin and Peres – often prodded by Clinton – increased their resolve to press on. Thus, Clinton, following the series of Hamas suicide bombings in late February and early March 1996: "Now is the time to redouble our efforts. Now is the time to be strong. Bullets and bombs must not prevail against the will for peace, and they will

¹³ For more on the persistent power of religion despite longstanding predictions to the contrary, see, for example, Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, *The Glory and the Power: The Fundamentalist Challenge to the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992) 7-18; and Jeffrey K. Hadden "Desacralizing Secularization Theory," *Secularization and Fundamentalism Reconsidered: Religion and the Political Order Volume III*, eds. Jeffrey K. Hadden and Anson Shupe (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 3-26.

¹⁴ Shimon Peres, *Battling for Peace: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1995), 9-16.

not.”¹⁵ Stedman refers to the advancing of a peace process despite spoiler opposition as the “departing train” strategy.¹⁶ As we shall see below, Hamas hijacked the departing train. Because of the reflexive push forward after terrorist actions, the bottom line was that bus bombings did not undermine the peace process; they catalyzed its advancement.

At that stage in the peace process, progress meant – for the Palestinians – more Israeli military withdrawals from the West Bank and Gaza. In this fashion, Hamas became for a time one of the primary beneficiaries of the peace process, reaping the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) from most of the Gaza Strip and the major cities of the West Bank without deigning to negotiate with the Zionist enemy, to make any concessions, or to foreswear commitment to Islam or violent opposition to Israel. Hamas after 1993 began to enjoy greater freedom of movement and action than ever before, since the once watchful eye of Israel’s security services became more constrained than at any time since 1967.

Under these circumstances – signed commitments notwithstanding – what incentive did the PNA have to restrain Hamas? Both the PNA and Hamas enjoyed the benefits of Israeli withdrawal. The PNA could claim that the violence was not its fault. Hamas uncompromisingly could continue its campaign against the Israeli populace. All the Palestinian parties were apparent winners. That this approach was calculated is affirmed not just by an examination of Hamas’s deeds, but by the words of its spokesmen:

We do not object to adopting a positive attitude if the Zionists withdraw from the Gaza Strip, as they declare from time to time, on

¹⁵ “Videotaped Statement by President Clinton to the People of Israel,” 5 March 1996 in *U.S. State Department Dispatch* 7.12 (18 March 1996): 118.

¹⁶ Stedman, “Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes,” 14.

the condition that a phased national Palestinian entity be established. We will also demand that the substance of this entity be Islamic, in accordance with democratic norms. The important thing is that we should not recognize [Israel] or give up our rights to all of Palestine from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.¹⁷

The event that broke this tag-team program of negotiations and violence came in March 1996, when then-Prime Minister Peres was negotiating the terms of Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank city of Hebron. After Hamas launched its most concentrated wave of bombings to date – four attacks, leaving more than 60 dead and hundreds wounded in just nine days – Peres responded to the Israeli electorate's angry calls for an end to the mayhem by suspending talks and halting redeployments until there was a cessation of violence and a PNA crackdown on Hamas.¹⁸ This constituted a major policy shift, for it marked the first time that the Israeli leadership imposed such a condition. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu continued this new policy after taking office in mid-1996. Since Hamas wanted nothing more than an IDF egress from Hebron, a city synonymous with religious fervor – it is the burial site of the Islamic and Jewish patriarch, Abraham – and a well-known Hamas base of support, Hamas pulled back. The lining up of incentives prodded the PNA into greater security cooperation with Israel, which also frustrated some ongoing Hamas efforts.¹⁹ Hamas made no further major attacks until the Hebron redeployment protocol was a done deal.

¹⁷ Tawfiq 'Abid, "Joining PLO Called 'Strategic' Not 'Tactical,'" *al-Dustur* 25 January 1993, 25 (FBIS-NES-93-015, 26 January 1993, 5). Noted in Barry Rubin, *Revolution Until Victory?: The Politics and History of the PLO* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 194 n28.

¹⁸ Arieh O'Sullivan, "IDF Likely to Leave Hebron Later than Sooner," *Jerusalem Post* 29 March 1996, 9.

¹⁹ Ely Karmon, "Hamas' Terrorism Strategy: Operational Limitations and Political Constraints," *MERIA Journal* 4.1 (March 2000), Internet:
<http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2000/issue1/jv4n1a7.html>.

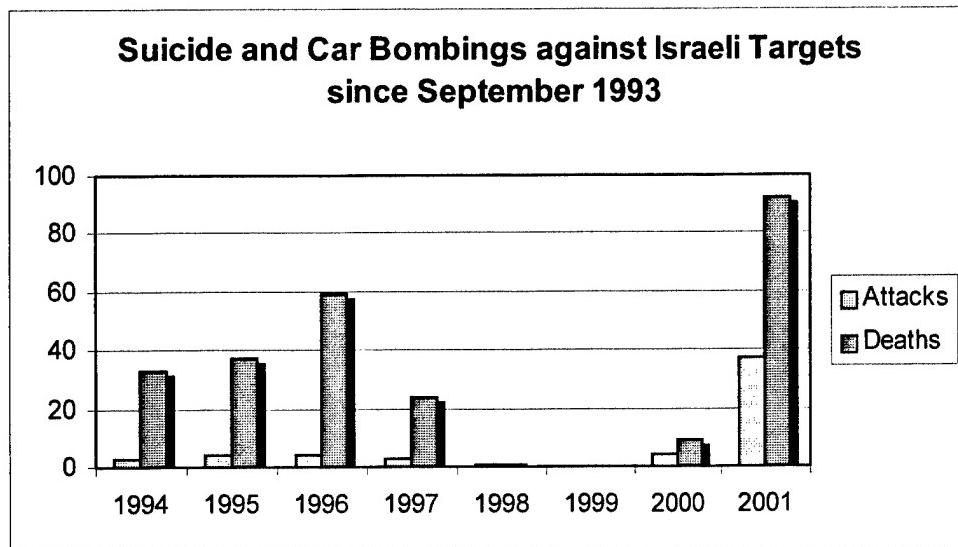
Successive Israeli governments – in varying degree – have continued to condition advancement of the peace process on the absence of violence. The result, until November 2000, was a significant drop in the number of bombings and other attacks on major Israeli population centers since the 1996 policy change. Some have explained that while Netanyahu was prime minister, hard-line Israeli foot-dragging gave Hamas no real process to disrupt.²⁰ But, if Hamas were truly committed to attacking Israel at all times, it could *always* find a reason to attack. The list of dates to be commemorated, martyrs to be avenged and religious imperatives to be fulfilled makes every day a potential occasion for violence. Moreover, Hamas's disjointed, cellular structure means that small groups, or even individuals, can act on their own initiative without the sanction of Hamas's more vocal and easily identified "political" leadership. Anyone can place a post-attack telephone call to a news agency and claim responsibility.

Even after Ehud Barak was elected prime minister in May 1999 and resumed what were considered at the time final status negotiations with the PNA, suicide attacks continued their negative trend, reaching zero in 1999. In fact, the period of greatest quiet since the signing of the DOP (there were no such attacks between October 29, 1998 and November 2, 2000) overlaps the period of the most intense negotiations between Israel and the PNA.²¹ Since the collapse of the peace process at Camp David in July 2000, suicide attacks have resumed and their numbers have reached all-time highs. As is clear in the chart below, the

²⁰ Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela's *The Palestinian Hamas*, while more explicit than most in its recognition of Hamas's utilitarian and selective employment of terrorism, explains the lull in violence this way, possibly reflecting the date of its publication. Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 77.

²¹ This is not to say that there were no terrorist attacks in this period. Of significance is that the successful attacks in this timeframe were much smaller in scale than the suicide and car bombings of the 1994-1996 period.

idea that Hamas uses suicide bombing to disrupt the peace process simply is not supported by the data.²²



The fact that a number of smaller attacks in 1998 (i.e., during the period leading up to the Wye River talks in October) of varying degrees of success (namely, the July 20 "burning van" incident and the September 24 Mount Scopus bombing in Jerusalem, and the October 19 grenade attack at the Be'er Sheva central bus station) actually were followed by Hamas *denial* of (or mixed messages about) responsibility constitutes the most compelling evidence yet that the organization has more in mind than just killing in the name of faith and revenge. If the murderous disruption of the peace process were Hamas's *raison d'être*, as many would have us believe, why would the organization deliberately forego the opportunity to take credit for these violent episodes? Hamas's leadership is politically savvy enough to know what is feasible and what is not in its quest to rid Palestine (no matter how defined) of Israel. The organization's leadership recognized that, at the time, the peace process, to which it is not an official party, in reality provided a cheaper and easier means to achieve its own goals than the

²² See the appendix to this chapter for a detailed peace process/terrorism timeline.

violence it so publicly espouses. In this case, inaction has spoken louder than words.

Another example of Hamas's politically expedient use and disuse of violence can be seen in the following statement, issued in late December 2001:

To our Palestinian fighters and to our Arab Islamic nations.

For the sake of the unity of our Palestinian people and in order to protect the path of Jihad (holy war) to achieve freedom and independence, and despite our full knowledge of the Zionist enemy's intentions to liquidate the will of our people and humiliate us through aggression, and in response to many wise people who want to avoid giving our occupiers a chance to split our unity, and because our historic responsibility at this sensitive stage in the history of our people, we announce the halting of martyrdom operations [i.e., suicide attacks] inside the occupied lands of 1948 [i.e., Israel proper] and the halting of firing mortar shells until further notice.

We reiterate that all our supporters in the movement, mainly the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades (the Hamas military wing), must comply with such an order until God deems otherwise.

It's either a victorious Jihad or martyrdom.²³

Here too, in word and in deed, we see that Hamas responds to day-to-day political exigencies. The unprecedented Israeli, American and European responses to the Hamas attacks of December 2001, and the resultant pressure on Yasser Arafat and, in turn, on Hamas itself, exerted a cost that Hamas deemed unacceptable. The result is the above declaration. Note that the decision not to act, just like the decision to act, is justified in the name of God Himself. Hamas

²³ "Text of Hamas Announcement," Associated Press 21 December 2001.

remains religious and political and is able to use violence selectively to advance both agendas accordingly.

Further compounding the confusion for decision-makers is the fact that Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) fits the common stereotypes of Islamist terror groups quite well. It is undoubtedly a more radical organization than Hamas. Its actions have been fewer, but more consistent in coming than those of Hamas. It is also a much smaller group than Hamas with less public support and is not as overtly political. PIJ's differences from Hamas and its living up to expectations make the need for understanding the differences between Islamist groups all the more important. One size does not fit all. That said, even PIJ joined Hamas in its decision to temporarily halt suicide attacks.²⁴

Reasons for Misdiagnosis

Stedman offers a number of organizational factors that can account for decision-maker mischaracterization of the motives and strategies of peace process spoilers.²⁵ In psychological terms, the phenomenon behind the common misunderstanding shared by Clinton, Christopher, Albright, Rabin and Peres is known as attitude polarization,²⁶ and is similar in its effects to the tyranny of the best estimate, introduced in Chapter Two. Jervis on the phenomenon:

Not being aware of the inevitable influence of beliefs upon perceptions has unfortunate consequences. If a decision-maker thinks that an event yields self-evident and unambiguous inferences when in fact these inferences are drawn because of his

²⁴ "Islamic Jihad to Halt Suicide Attacks, Aide Says," Reuters 21 December 2001.

²⁵ These include prior commitments and doctrine as well as organizational "holy grails," interests and roles. See Stedman, "Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes," 48-51.

²⁶ See Charles G. Lord, Lee Ross, and Mark R. Lepper, "Biased Assimilation and Attitude Polarization: The Effects of Prior Theories on Subsequently Considered Evidence," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 37.11 (November 1979): 2098-2109.

pre-existing views, he will grow too confident of his views and will prematurely exclude alternatives because he will conclude that the event provides independent support for his beliefs. People frequently fail to realize that evidence that is consistent with their hypothesis may also be consistent with other views.²⁷

In this case, the understandable belief that Hamas sought to frustrate the peace process through violence led all of the major actors to ignore the fact that the group had a vested interest in the advancement of the process – to a certain point. As is often the case, nuance was sacrificed for black-and-white parsimony, leading to the “self-evident and unambiguous inferences” that the decision-makers were predisposed to make. Occam’s razor, it would appear, is complicit in a considerable amount of Middle Eastern bloodletting.

In some respects, Hamas’s attitude to the peace process is immaterial. Hamas can and should be dealt with on the basis of its actions. President Clinton’s Executive Order 12947 does the right thing for the wrong reasons. The executive order allows federal agencies to act against Hamas and other organizations identified as threatening to the Middle East peace process and operating in the United States, much as has been done against al-Qa’idah and other groups since September 11. Regardless of Hamas’s, PIJ’s, Hizballah’s or any other group’s position vis-à-vis the peace process, all remain terrorist organizations responsible for the deaths of innocent people, including American citizens. That alone makes them “an unusual threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States” and should be reason enough to seize their assets and arrest or deport their members. The groups’ support or contempt for the peace process or any other local issue is secondary.

²⁷ Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 181.

Whom Does Hamas Serve?

The dichotomous understanding of Hamas is not limited to decision-makers. The identification of Hamas's very mundane interest in reducing the IDF presence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip calls into question the validity of a relatively new conception of religious terrorism that has gained currency among analysts as well. Seeking to explain the increased lethality of religious terrorism in recent decades, Bruce Hoffman posits a number of "core characteristics" of the phenomenon, which we quote here at length:

For the religious terrorist, violence is first and foremost a sacramental act or divine duty executed in direct response to some theological demand or imperative. Terrorism thus assumes a transcendental dimension, and its perpetrators are consequently unconstrained by the political, moral or practical constraints that may affect other terrorists. Whereas secular terrorists, even if they have the capacity to do so, rarely attempt indiscriminate killing on a massive scale because such tactics are not consonant with their political aims and therefore are regarded as counterproductive, if not immoral, religious terrorists often seek the elimination of broadly defined categories of enemies and accordingly regard such large-scale violence not only as morally justified but as a necessary expedient for the attainment of their goals.²⁸

It undoubtedly is the case that Hamas terrorists see their actions as holy.²⁹ The problem with this dichotomous notion of religious terrorism, however, is that it misunderstands Hamas much in the way it once mistook post-revolutionary Iran. We now know that even "Islamic" states have interests and have learned

²⁸ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 94.

²⁹ For details about Hamas bombers' beliefs, see Nasra Hassan, "An Arsenal of Believers: Talking to the 'Human Bombs,'" *The New Yorker* 19 November 2001, Internet:
http://www.newyorker.com/FACT/?011119fa_FACT1.

how to look out for them.³⁰ Hamas, as we have already seen, is fanatical like a fox. Contrary to Hoffman's assertion, the movement's controlled use of terror suggests that, like its secular counterparts, it is in fact constrained by political and practical, if not moral constraints. Hoffman continues:

Religious and secular terrorists also differ in their constituencies. Whereas secular terrorists attempt to appeal to a constituency variously composed of actual and potential sympathizers, members of the communities they purport to 'defend' or the aggrieved people for whom they claim to speak, religious terrorists are at once activists and constituents engaged in what they regard as a total war. They seek to appeal to no other constituency than themselves. Thus the restraints on violence that are imposed on secular terrorists by the desire to appeal to a tacitly supportive or uncommitted constituency are not relevant to the religious terrorist. Moreover, this absence of a constituency in the secular terrorist sense leads to a sanctioning of almost limitless violence against a virtually open-ended category of targets: that is, anyone who is not a member of the terrorists' religion or religious sect.³¹

One need go no further than the post-1954 Pledge of Allegiance to realize that it is possible to serve both God and country; in the minds of most, the two are not mutually exclusive. So too for Hamas. In addition to the self-imposed restraints on Hamas violence discussed above, the very clear and explicit declarations of allegiance of its members to other Muslims, to the Arabs (i.e., to include non-Muslims) and to the Palestinian people demonstrate an acute awareness of the existence of very human constituents. This is true of Islamist groups across the Middle East. As we noted above, while many Islamist movements have much in common, (e.g., the stated desire to establish a political entity based on Islamic

³⁰ See Haggay Ram, "Exporting Iran's Islamic Revolution: Steering a Path between Pan-Islam and Nationalism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 8.2 (Summer 1996): 8-9.

³¹ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 94-5.

law), it has been demonstrated repeatedly and convincingly that Islamist movements with few exceptions have unique, local agendas.³² Thus, Hamas has two sets of human constituents; aside from the people whose interests the group claims to be defending are those proponents of the peace process that Hamas has been shrewd enough to manipulate through its calculated use of violence. Hamas's members may believe that they are acting in the service of God alone, but their statements and actions suggest that plenty of people are considered in their decision making.

If Hamas has a human audience, how then can we explain the at-times seemingly unrestrained Islamist violence detailed in *Inside Terrorism*?³³ First, as noted by Hoffman, the observed restraint of secular terrorists is in part the result of the targets of their actions and the targets of their messages often being the same population. Thus, for example, Marxist groups did not want to kill too many of their potential co-revolutionaries. With few exceptions, religious terrorists target those of other faiths for an audience of their co-religionists.³⁴ Second, while the belief that Hamas terrorists are acting in the service of God is certainly a factor, there appear to be other ominous factors at work as well. Here too, perceptual biases threaten analysis, for the answer may lie in unfamiliar societal, religious and/or cultural attitudes toward violence and its role in politics.

There are a number of research centers that have conducted periodic public opinion polls in the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 1993. A recurring question

³² See, for example, Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994); idem, "What You Should Know about Islam as a Strategic Factor," *America and the Muslim Middle East*, Philip D. Zelikow and Robert B. Zoellick, eds. (Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute), 36-8; and Meir Litvak, "The Islamization of Palestinian Identity: The Case of Hamas," *Data and Analysis* August 1996 (Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University, The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies).

³³ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 92-3.

³⁴ The massacres in Algeria in recent years provide the most glaring examples of internecine religious terrorism.

has dealt with support for violence against Israelis in general and, since 1995, for suicide bombings in particular. It should be noted that at its peak in April 2001, Palestinian public support for suicide bombings against civilians reached 76 percent, and it has not been measured below 24 percent.³⁵ This finding may indicate that the expected backlash, which has been assumed to limit the lethality of terrorism employed by secular, ideological terrorist groups in Europe, for example, may not exist to nearly the same degree in Palestinian society. That is, it is possible that the enmity towards Israel and/or some undefined religious, cultural and/or social set of values has led large segments of the Palestinian public to be not as put off by large-scale anti-Israeli violence as might be expected in another, more familiar context. This appears to be borne out further by a recent survey of terrorist groups' Web sites by Gabi Weiman and Yariv Tzfat, who found that while almost all groups hid or omitted their violent activity, Hamas and Hizbullah even go so far as to forge evidence about the quantity and quality of their own acts of violence.³⁶

One of the reasons that we find terrorism so abhorrent is that it violates the line we have come to draw between combatants and noncombatants. This line lies at the heart of the Geneva Conventions. But the Geneva Conventions developed as the result of gruesome wars in Europe. Though part of international law, they unmistakably are part of the Western heritage. It is possible that the notions of what (or who) constitutes a legitimate target of warfare (and Hamas actions are always described as military operations) taken for granted in the United States and Europe differ from those in Palestine or elsewhere in the world. The point is not that Hamas has no constituents and thus is free to kill more indiscriminately.

³⁵ Jerusalem Media & Communication Centre, *Palestinian Opinion Pulse 2.5* (July 2001), Internet: <http://www.jmcc.org/publicpoll/pop/01/jul/pop5.htm>.

³⁶ The study's authors come to an alternative conclusion about the motives behind the graphic violence depicted on the Web sites: the sites are used as a tool for psychological warfare against the relatively Web-savvy Israeli population. Shahar Smooha, "Terror with an Olive Branch,"

Rather, the poll numbers and the group's Web-based self-promotion³⁷ would suggest that Hamas does have constituents, but they do not view the killing of large numbers of civilians as disapprovingly as we might want to believe. For a significant number of Palestinians, Hamas's ruthless methods are reasonable and acceptable.

Additionally, there might be a different understanding of what is meant by peace at work here. We in the West take for granted that the peace process reflects a fundamental rejection of violence as a means of conflict resolution. It may be the case that many Palestinians do not view peace in this way. The remarkable variation in – not the magnitude of – support for suicide bombings suggests that the rejection of violence in Palestinian society is not a matter of moral principle as much as it is one of political tactics. The fact that the PNA seems to have made a conscious policy choice to resume overt hostilities against Israel in the fall of 2000 lends further weight to this assessment. Hamas and PIJ prisoners were released from PNA jails and the two groups, in addition to the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, have worked hard to prove their destructive prowess to an approving public. As in the case of Syria in 1973, there may be a "counter-Clausewitz effect" at work here. That is, for many Palestinians, politics may be war by other means.

The implications of this discussion are grave, for they challenge some of what we most want to believe about human nature. It is not by chance that we often refer to brutal acts of indiscriminate violence as inhuman. Ironically, Hoffman notes that religious terrorists often use similar language to describe their enemies and justify violence against them.³⁸ Similarly, we want to believe that peace means burying the hatchet in the ground, not in someone else's back. As we have seen

Ha'aretz English Edition 20 June 2002, Internet:
<http://www.haaretzdaily.com/hasen/objects/pages/PrintArticleEn.jhtml?itemNo=178217>.

³⁷ See, for example, Internet: <http://www.palestine-info.co.uk/hamas/index.htm>.

³⁸ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 95.

in other instances, our assumptions about the nature of religious terrorism in general and Hamas in particular reflect not only our own biases and understandings of the way the world works, but also what we want to protect ourselves from. By postulating that religious terrorist groups like Hamas are accountable only to God, Hoffman is sacrificing the few for the benefit of the many. That is, if Hamas's terrorism is disconnected from any earthly constituency, any conclusions about the group are limited in scope to the group itself and there is still hope for the more reasonable rest of mankind. Plus – according to the post-Enlightenment myth – religion is supposed to be "curable" by wealth and education. If, on the other hand, Hamas represents a large number of people – educated people, no less – this has ominous ramifications for both the prospects of peace and for our own ability to effect change. Recognizing Hamas's audience speaks volumes about the context from which it emerged as well as about the limits of our own power. Painful though this may be, it is the essential starting point for more useful future analysis and policy-making.

There is reason for optimism. If we have established that Hamas is a "normal" terrorist group insofar as it has mundane interests and a constituency besides God, and tempers its actions accordingly, then it follows that there might be policy levers that we can use in facing the Hamas threat. The Israelis (perhaps inadvertently) proved this in 1996 by raising the price of their Hebron withdrawal. By recognizing that Hamas has earthly interests (i.e., Hamas has a utility function), and by more accurately identifying them (i.e., via placement), decision-makers can incorporate those interests and the means for manipulating them into useful rational actor models. Contrary to popular belief, we can reason with these people, even if not directly. Identifying the ways to do so will be one of the great policy challenges of the years to come. It cannot be done successfully until the prejudices that cloud our vision of what Hamas wants and does not want are removed.

Appendix: Peace Process-Suicide/Car Bombing Terrorism Timeline, 1993-2001

Date	Peace Process Milestone	Attack	Dead	Injured	Location	Responsibility
13-Sep-93	DOP signed					
6-Apr-94		Car bomb	8		Afula	Hamas
13-Apr-94		Suicide bombing	5		Hadera	Hamas
4-May-94	Gaza-Jericho Agreement					
29-Aug-94	Agreement on the Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities					
19-Oct-94		Suicide bombing	22		Tel-Aviv	Hamas
11-Nov-94		Suicide bombing	3		Gaza	PIJ
22-Jan-95		Suicide bombing	19		Beit Lid	PIJ
9-Apr-95		Car bomb	8		Gaza	Hamas/PIJ
24-Jul-95		Suicide bombing	6		Ramat Gan	Hamas
21-Aug-95		Suicide bombing	4		Jerusalem	Hamas
28-Sep-95	Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip					
20-Jan-96	Elections to the Palestinian Council and the Head of the PNA					
25-Feb-96		Suicide bombing	26		Jerusalem	Hamas
25-Feb-96		Suicide bombing	1		Ashkelon	Hamas
3-Mar-96		Suicide bombing	19		Jerusalem	Hamas
4-Mar-96		Suicide bombing	13		Tel-Aviv	Hamas/PIJ
24-Apr-96	Palestinian National Council votes to amend the Palestinian National Charter					
5-May-96	Commencement of permanent status negotiations					
9-May-96	Agreement to establish a Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH)					
17-Jan-97	Protocol Concerning the Redeployment in Hebron					
21-Mar-97		Suicide bombing	3	48	Tel-Aviv	Hamas?
30-Jul-97		Suicide bombing	16	178	Jerusalem	Hamas
4-Sep-97		Suicide bombing	5	181	Jerusalem	Hamas
23-Oct-98	Wye River Memorandum					
29-Oct-98		Suicide car bomb	1		Gaza	
4-Sep-99	Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum					
13-Sep-99	Resumption of permanent status negotiations					
11-25 Jul-00	Camp David Negotiations					
28-Sep-00	Al-Aqsa Intifada begins					
2-Nov-00		Car bomb	2	10	Jerusalem	PIJ
20-Nov-00		Roadside bomb	2	9	Gaza	
22-Nov-00		Car bomb	2	60	Hadera	
22-Dec-00		Suicide bombing	0	3	Mehola	
1-Jan-01		Car bomb	0	60	Netanya	Hamas
21-27 Jan-01	Marathon talks in Taba					
8-Feb-01		Car bomb	0	4	Jerusalem	
14-Feb-01		Suicide attack (by bus driver)	8	25	Holon	
1-Mar-01		Car bomb	1	9	Mei Ami	
4-Mar-01		Suicide bombing	3	60	Netanya	
27-Mar-01		Car bomb	0	7	Jerusalem	PIJ
27-Mar-01		Suicide bombing	0	28	Jerusalem	Hamas
28-Mar-01		Suicide bombing	2	4	Kfar Saba	Hamas
22-Apr-01		Suicide bombing	1	60	Kfar Saba	Hamas
23-Apr-01		Car bomb	0	8	Or Yehuda	
29-Apr-01		Suicide car bomb	0	0	Nablus	Hamas
30-Apr-01	Release of Sharm al-Sheikh Fact-Finding (Mitchell) Committee Report					
18-May-01		Suicide bombing	5	100	Netanya	Hamas
25-May-01		Car bomb	0	65	Hadera	PIJ
27-May-01		Car bomb	0	0	Jerusalem	PFLP
27-May-01		Planted bomb	0	30	Jerusalem	PIJ

30-May-01		Car bomb	0	8	Netanya	PIJ
1-Jun-01		Suicide bombing	21	120	Tel-Aviv	
14-Jun-01	Tenet Cease-Fire Plan					
22-Jun-01		Car bomb	2	0	Gaza	Hamas
2-Jul-01		Car bomb	0	6	Yehud	PFLP
9-Jul-01		Suicide bombing	0	0	Gaza	Hamas
16-Jul-01		Suicide bombing	2	11	Binyamina	PIJ
8-Aug-01		Suicide bombing	0	1	B'kaot	
9-Aug-01		Suicide bombing	15	130	Jerusalem	Hamas/PIJ
12-Aug-01		Suicide bombing	0	21	Kiryat Motzkin	PIJ
21-Aug-01		Car bomb	0	1	Jerusalem	
4-Sep-01		Suicide bombing	0	20	Jerusalem	Hamas
9-Sep-01		Suicide bombing	3	90	Nahariya	Hamas
9-Sep-01		Suicide bombing	0	17	Beit Lid	
1-Oct-01		Car bomb	0		Jerusalem	
7-Oct-01		Suicide bombing	1	0	Sheluhot	PIJ
26-Nov-01		Suicide bombing	0	2	Gaza	Hamas
29-Nov-01		Suicide bombing	3	9	Hadera	PIJ/Fatah
1-Dec-01		Suicide bombing	11	180	Jerusalem	Hamas
2-Dec-01		Suicide bombing	15	40	Haifa	Hamas
5-Dec-01		Suicide bombing	0		Jerusalem	PIJ
9-Dec-01		Suicide bombing	0	30	Haifa	
12-Dec-01		Suicide bombing	0	4	Gaza	
		Totals	258	1639		

Sources: Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs Website, Internet: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/>, wire services.

Data for injuries and claims of responsibility are incomplete.

PIJ = Palestinian Islamic Jihad

PFLP = Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

CHAPTER FOUR DETERRING AL-QA'IDAH: PAST, PRESENT, POWER AND PERCEPTION

Deterrence occurs above all in the minds of men. – Henry Kissinger¹

Introduction

Following the September 11 attacks, it became quite common (one might even say fashionable) to speak of a U.S. intelligence failure, since many people have difficulty accepting that a plot of such lethal magnitude and broad international dimensions could have gone unnoticed by the various government agencies responsible for national security. But whatever the failure to foresee, September 11 represents first and foremost a failure to *deter*,² for “the best way to deal with a contingency is to avoid it.”³ Deterrence – one of four stated key policy goals of American defense strategy in general,⁴ and an explicit goal of American counter-terrorism strategy in particular⁵ – clearly was not accomplished; the terrorists were not deterred from committing murder.

¹ Henry A. Kissinger, “Conditions of World Order,” *Daedalus*, XCV (Spring 1966), reprinted in *International Politics and Foreign Policy: A Reader in Research and Theory*, James N. Rosenau, ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1969), 263.

² This is in contrast to a failure of deterrence or of deterrence theory, which is a more serious charge. The difference has been the subject of intense debate among political scientists. See George H. Quester, “Some Thoughts on ‘Deterrence Failures,’” *Perspectives on Deterrence*, Paul C. Stern et al., eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 54.

³ Paul K. Davis and John Arquilla, *Thinking about Opponent Behavior in Crisis and Conflict: A Generic Model for Analysis and Group Discussion* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1991), 1.

⁴ United States, Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* 30 September 2001 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense), 12-13.

⁵ Unclassified abstract of Presidential Decision Directive 39 (PDD 39), reproduced verbatim in United States, General Accounting Office, *Combating Terrorism: Federal Agencies’ Efforts to Implement National Policy and Strategy*, GAO/NSAID-97-254 (Washington, DC: United States General Accounting Office, 1997), 70.

The Department of Defense defines deterrence as "a state of mind brought about by the existence of a credible threat of unacceptable counteraction."⁶ Credibility of threat has everything to do with perception, and it is clear from al-Qa'idah's decision to act that the organization's leadership was insufficiently impressed by American power. For it seems unlikely that al-Qa'idah believed that the September 11 attacks would lead to an American military and legal response that would leave the organization's infrastructure, training camps, financial operations and other assets in ruins, its host country filled with Western ordnance and soldiers, and its leadership and rank-and-file dead, captured or on the run. If one posits that the attacks were designed to bring about a large-scale war between Islam (however defined) and the United States, it is also obvious that bin Laden cannot have expected that no such war would materialize or that he might lose such a war. In other words, given that the current state of affairs, from al-Qa'idah's perspective, is seemingly worse than the *status quo ante bellum*, one may reasonably conclude that if bin Laden and the leadership of al-Qa'idah had known in advance the effects September 11 would have on their own fortunes, they probably would not have pursued such a course of action.⁷ Built into this assumption is one more: that bin Laden and al-Qa'idah are instrumentally rational; there is every reason to believe that these men consciously take specific actions in order to achieve specific, logically following ends.⁸ The obvious and related questions about whether and how al-Qa'idah can in fact be deterred and about al-Qa'idah's attitudes towards risk, and the less

⁶ United States, Department of Defense, *DOD Dictionary of Military Terms*, Internet: <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/doddict/>.

⁷ A similar point is made in Paul K. Davis, "Synthetic Cognitive Modeling of Adversaries for Effects-Based Planning," *Proceedings of the SPIE* 4716 (July 2002).

⁸ It is, of course, possible that bin Laden was counting achieving on precisely the kind of lionization that he has experienced since September 11, and in this sense can be seen to have scored a victory of sorts. However, given his instrumental rationality and the post-September 11 constraints on his resources and actions, it seems unlikely that this type of limited victory is what drove him and his followers to act.

than obvious answers to these questions will form the focus of this chapter and the next.

Approach and Hypotheses

In this chapter, we shall present a historical and theoretical examination of the U.S.-al-Qa'idah interaction – both al-Qa'idah's perception and its sources as well as the American understanding of its own image in the eyes of al-Qa'idah – and how the synergy between them contributed to the deterrence shortfall. This historical review is informed by the deterrence and political psychology literature, both of which lend a great deal of insight into the difficulties inherent to deterring a group like al-Qa'idah. In large part, deterrence was not achieved because al-Qa'idah is highly motivated, driven by a messianic zeal and convinced that the United States is the cause of many of its problems and is at its core a weak, timid state, vulnerable to terror and divinely destined for destruction. Additionally, al-Qa'idah leaders might have felt its risks were relatively low due to an inflated, though not unfounded, high estimation of the group's own stealth. American deterrent self-understanding was undoubtedly influenced by the fact that the United States had never suffered such an attack previously. A mix of other reasons contributed to the failure to deter al-Qa'idah as well. Some of these reasons are based in U.S. policy decisions. Other, perhaps more structural reasons stem from the nature of the American policy-making system. Still others are born of the nature and psychology of al-Qa'idah's membership. The distinction here is largely analytical, for in practice all of these factors are interrelated. We shall examine these factors in turn, linking them to likely reasons that their implications at times have been difficult to see.

Again relying on the deterrence literature, we conclude the chapter with an analysis of the question, Can groups like al-Qa'idah be deterred? Prescriptive issues are tricky here, as much of the deterrence literature assumes that both the defender and the challenger are state actors. In some instances, the fact that al-

Qa'idah is a sub-state actor appears to be unimportant. In others, however, there is reason to believe that prescribed actions intended to enhance state-to-state deterrence in fact would undermine deterrence against a terrorist group like al-Qa'idah. Consistent with other recent work on this topic, we have found that the deterriability of the various membership components of al-Qa'idah is context-specific and defies generalization.⁹ The next chapter includes an analysis of more specific policy options and their potential impact on deterrence. There we attempt to identify the conditions and policy levers which would both help and hurt American deterrent efforts against al-Qa'idah or other similarly structured and motivated organizations.

America's Wary Trigger Finger: The Powell/Weinberger Doctrine and the Use of Force

In the years since the Vietnam War, and strongly reflecting the lessons learned from that conflict,¹⁰ American foreign and military policy has been guided to a varying degree by what has come to be known as the Powell Doctrine – so named because then-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell explained the concept in a now famous *Foreign Affairs* article.¹¹ Though associated with now Secretary of State Powell, the concept has been articulated by many and goes by different names. In his memoirs, Powell himself attributes its formulation to former Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and its underlying principles to Clausewitz.¹²

Powell lists six “tests” for using U.S. forces abroad:

⁹ Paul K. Davis, “A Framework for the ‘Influencing’ Aspect of Counterterrorism Strategy,” unpublished background paper, 2002.

¹⁰ Colin L. Powell with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995), 148-9.

¹¹ Colin L. Powell, “U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead,” *Foreign Affairs* Winter 1992/93: 32-45.

1. Commit only if our or our allies' vital interests are at stake.
2. If we commit, do so with all the resources necessary to win.
3. Go in only with clear political and military objectives.
4. Be ready to change the commitment if objectives change, since wars rarely stand still.
5. Only take on commitments that can gain the support of the American people and the Congress.
6. Commit U.S. forces only as a last resort.

Or, as Powell summed up, "In short, is the national interest at stake? If the answer is yes, go in, and go in to win. Otherwise, stay out."¹³

Weinberger's drafting of these guidelines came in the wake of the bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983, which left 241 dead. This is particularly noteworthy, as the Beirut attack is mentioned in bin Laden's 1996 "Declaration of War" as an example of American weakness. Specifically, the American decision to withdraw from Lebanon is cited as illustrative of the American unwillingness to suffer casualties, even among its armed forces.¹⁴ What about post-Beirut (that is, ostensibly in the era of the Powell/Weinberger Doctrine) confrontations between al-Qa'idah and the United States? How did the overt encounters between the two parties conclude and how did each side understand those conclusions? What does this suggest about the implementation of the doctrine and its effectiveness?

¹² Powell, *My American Journey*, 207-8, 303.

¹³ Ibid., 303.

¹⁴ Usama bin Laden, "Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places," 23 August 1996, Internet: <http://66.96.205.195/~azzam/html/articlesdeclaration.htm>. Paul K. Davis and John Arquilla point out that Saddam Hussein mentioned the Beirut example in a speech discussing American weakness five months before his invasion of Kuwait. Paul K. Davis and John Arquilla, *Deterring or Coercing Opponents in Crisis: Lessons from the War with Saddam Hussein* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1991), 56.

A History of Confrontation and Non-confrontation

The earliest recorded al-Qa'idah attack on Americans came in 1993 in Aden, Yemen, where a hotel was bombed with the unrealized goal of killing American soldiers on their way to Mogadishu, Somalia. As it happened, the soldiers had already left the hotel.¹⁵ While the deployment of the U.S. military in Mogadishu extended over months, involved a mix of forces and witnessed a number of operations on the ground, the most important incident there was the 17-hour battle on October 3-4, 1993 that has been the focus of the book, and now the motion picture, *Black Hawk Down*.¹⁶ Eighteen American servicemen lost their lives in that battle with Somali Islamists trained in part by al-Qa'idah, which was followed soon thereafter by a withdrawal of U.S. forces from Somalia. One could argue that the decision to send troops to Somalia was hardly exemplary of the Powell/Weinberger Doctrine; the mission fails a number of the six tests listed above and, indeed, the decision to leave appears to reflect the doctrine more than the decision to go in the first place.

From bin Laden's point of view, there was no difference between the U.S. response to the Beirut attack and to the tragic outcome of the Mogadishu battle: the Americans suffered casualties and turned tail; in Somalia less than 20 fatalities were enough to drive the Americans out. Thus, in 1998, when then-Secretary of Defense William Perry responded to the bombing of the Khobar Towers in Dharan, Saudi Arabia, in which 19 Americans were killed, by stating that the attack only strengthened his resolve, bin Laden was skeptical:

¹⁵ Yonah Alexander and Michael S. Swetnam, *Usama bin Laden's al-Qaida: Profile of a Terrorist Network* (Ardsley, NY: Transnational Publishers, 2001), 33.

¹⁶ Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999, 2000).

We say to the Defence Secretary that his talk can induce a grieving mother to laughter! and shows the fears that had enshrined you all. Where was this false courage of yours when the explosion in Beirut took place on 1983 CE (1403 A.H). You were turned into scattered pits and pieces at that time; 241 mainly marines solders were killed. And where was this courage of yours when two explosions made you to leave Aden in less than twenty four hours!

But your most disgraceful case was in Somalia; where after vigorous propaganda about the power of the USA and its post cold war leadership of the new world order you moved tens of thousands of international force, including twenty eight thousands American solders into Somalia. However, when tens of your solders were killed in minor battles and one American Pilot was dragged in the streets of Mogadishu you left the area carrying disappointment, humiliation, defeat and your dead with you. Clinton appeared in front of the whole world threatening and promising revenge, but these threats were merely a preparation for withdrawal. You have been disgraced by Allah and you withdrew; the extent of your impotence and weaknesses became very clear. It was a pleasure for the "heart" of every Muslim and a remedy to the "chests" of believing nations to see you defeated in the three Islamic cities of Beirut, Aden and Mogadishu.¹⁷

On August 7, 1998, al-Qa'idah attacked the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam, killing over 300 and wounding over 5,000. On August 20, the U.S. responded forcibly by launching approximately 78 cruise missiles at al-Qa'idah targets in Afghanistan and the Sudan. The act was presented by the administration as a major policy shift, for this was the first time the U.S. "unreservedly acknowledged a preemptive military strike against a terrorist organization or network."¹⁸ President Clinton publicly justified the American military response in terms of deterrence:

¹⁷ Bin Laden, "Declaration of War." Grammatical errors are in the original translation.

¹⁸ Raphael F. Perl, *Terrorism: U.S. Response to Bombings in Kenya and Tanzania: A New Policy Direction?* CRS Report to Congress 98-733F Updated September 1, 1998 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service), 1.

But of this I am also sure; the risks from inaction to America and the world would be far greater than action, for that would embolden our enemies, leaving their ability and their willingness to strike us intact. In this case, we knew before our attack that these groups already had planned further actions against us and others.¹⁹

Cruise missiles hold a special mystique in the American perspective. Their combination of destructive power (each Tomahawk carries a 1000-pound warhead), accuracy and range mean that – under ideal conditions – specific targets can be hit without endangering unintended personnel. Further, these can be employed without risking pilots or getting into a ground war. But these virtues in the eyes of American citizens, soldiers and decision-makers, are an indication of weakness to our al-Qa'idah adversaries. Not only were the response attacks largely ineffective (especially against the al-Qa'idah leadership and camps in Afghanistan), they were seen as another small and cowardly step by a wounded paper tiger:

The American bombardment had only shown that the world is governed by the law of the jungle. That brutal, treacherous attack killed a number of civilian Muslims. As for material damage, it was minimal. By the grace of God, the missiles were ineffective. The raid proved that the American army is going downhill in its

¹⁹ William J. Clinton, "Address to the Nation by the President," (Washington, DC: The White House Office of the Press Secretary, August 20, 1998), Internet: http://www.state.gov/www/regions/africa/strike_clinton980820a.html. The April 14, 1986 U.S. attack on Libya was also presented as "a preemptive strike, directed against the Libyan terrorist infrastructure and *designed to deter acts of terrorism by Libya....*" The important difference here is that Libya is a state, while al-Qa'idah is a substate actor. Ronald Reagan, *Use of United States Armed Forces in Libya: Communication from the President of the United States Transmitting Notification of the Employment of United States Armed Forces in Libya, Pursuant to 50 U.S.C. 1543(a)*, House Document 99-201 (Washington, DC: 16 April 1986). Emphasis added.

morale. Its members are too cowardly and too fearful to meet the young people of Islam face to face.²⁰

Of course, it could be argued that both Clinton's and bin Laden's statements are merely attempts at public diplomacy. As a measurement of deterrence, though, actions speak louder than words, and the bottom line is that al-Qa'idah continued to strike. In the last successful al-Qa'idah attack on the United States prior to September 11, the USS *Cole* was attacked on October 5, 2000 in the port of Aden, killing 17 American sailors. To this attack there was no American military response.

Year	Attack	Overt U.S. Military Response
1983	Beirut	Withdrawal
1993	Aden	-
1993	Mogadishu	Withdrawal
1998	Al-Khobar Towers	-
1998	Kenya/Tanzania	Cruise missile attacks
2000	USS <i>Cole</i>	-
2001	September 11	Operation Enduring Freedom

Some Islamist Attacks and U.S. Responses

In some respects, it is difficult to find fault with al-Qa'idah's take on the historical record. The fact is that American military responses prior to September 11 were either very limited or nonexistent, sending a weak deterrent message. Operation Enduring Freedom is several orders of magnitude larger than any response to Islamist terrorism that came before it. The very need for such an operation, though, represents the failure to deter. As John Garnett put it, "...the use of military force represents the breakdown of military power. The physical

²⁰ "Wrath of God: Osama bin Laden Lashes Out against the West," *Time* 11 January 1999, Internet: <http://www.time.com/time/asia/asia/magazine/1999/990111/osama1.html>.

use of deterrent power shows not how strong a country is but how impotent it has become.”²¹ It is interesting to note, then, how American counter-terrorism policy has been understood by some in the United States. A 1999 RAND study conducted for the U.S. Air Force asserted that “Apart from the ordeal of the U.S. embassy hostage crisis in Tehran and the failed attempt at intervention, *the leading image* of U.S. counterterrorism policy is the 1986 Operation El Dorado Canyon against Libya....”²² Given that Libya differs in many respects from the ideal held up by al-Qa’idah and that the American attack can be seen as a demonstration of U.S. resolve, it is hardly surprising that the attack is not mentioned in bin Laden’s “Declaration of War.” Clearly, though, the leading image of U.S. counter-terrorism policy in the minds of bin Laden, al-Qa’idah members and others (even in the United States) is not one of action or even reaction, but of inaction. Both sides appear to be victims of selective filtering in order to validate their own policy choices.²³ That is, Americans focused on Operation El Dorado Canyon while bin Laden focused on everything else.²⁴

Psychological Inclinations

Even to the extent that the American message of commitment was made, however, a number of motivated and unmotivated biases acted against its being interpreted as intended. Ideologically speaking, al-Qa’idah’s interpretation of history – namely, that the United States is weak and cowardly – fits the organization’s worldview perfectly. The West is *supposed* to be weak, cowardly and prone to defeat by faithful Muslims waging *jihad* in the name of Islam,

²¹ John Garnett, “The Role of Military Power,” *Contemporary Strategy I: Theories and Concepts*, John Baylis, et al., (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1987), 84.

²² Ian O. Lesser, “Countering the New Terrorism: Implications for Strategy,” *Countering the New Terrorism*, Ian O. Lesser et al. (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1999), 112. Emphasis added.

²³ This phenomenon is discussed in Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 574.

²⁴ Of course, this is a generalization. Before September 11, the Clinton and Bush administrations both worried about the real and perceived erosion of America’s ability to defend itself against terrorism in general, and against bin Laden in particular.

precisely the way al-Qa'idah understands itself. Indeed, as noted in Chapter Three, what is seen as the rise of Judeo-Christian power at the expense of Islam is contrary to one of the most deeply held tenets of Islamic faith: Islam was revealed to supersede its monotheistic predecessors and, as bin Laden himself has put it, "He who God guides will never lose."²⁵ Moreover, such a perceived match between belief and data is predicted in the political psychology literature,²⁶ and exacerbated through the process of attitude polarization, which in turn can lead to overconfidence, a widely observed phenomenon in cases where deterrence was not achieved:²⁷

[P]eople not only assimilate incoming information to their existing beliefs... but do not know they are doing so. Instead, they incorrectly attribute their interpretations of events to the events themselves; they do not realize that their beliefs and expectations play a dominant role. They therefore become too confident because they see many events as providing independent confirmation of their beliefs when, in fact, the events would be seen differently by someone who started with different ideas. Thus people see evidence as less ambiguous than it is, think that their views are steadily being confirmed, and so feel justified in holding to them ever more firmly.²⁸

²⁵ "Bin Laden: America 'Filled with Fear,'" CNN 7 October 2001, Internet: <http://www.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/central/10/07/ret.binladen.transcript/>.

²⁶ "When an event occurs, it is a stimulus that may be legitimately perceived in several different ways. The perception that actually occurs is the one that requires the least reorganization of the person's other ideas." Joseph de Rivera, *The Psychological Dimension of Foreign Policy* (Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1968), 22.

²⁷ Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, "Rational Deterrence Theory: I Think, Therefore I Deter," *World Politics* 41.2 (January 1989): 215; Richard Ned Lebow, "Deterrence: A Political and Psychological Critique," *Perspectives on Deterrence*, 39-40; See also Janice Gross Stein, "Calculation, Miscalculation, and Conventional Deterrence I: The View from Cairo," *Psychology and Deterrence*, Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow, Janice Gross Stein, eds. (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 41-5. There is also something of a vicious circle here: "It is a characteristic of human reasoning... that 'low-probability' risks are thresholded-out when the reasoner is eager for action." Davis and Arquilla, *Deterring or Coercing Opponents*, 47.

²⁸ Jervis, "Deterrence and Perception," *International Security* 7.3 (Winter 1982-1983): 21.

Moreover, this take on events also jibed with another chapter in Islamist history: in the very land where al-Qa'idah found refuge and support, the *mujahidin* from which al-Qa'idah drew and grew had defeated another Christian (though atheist) superpower and precipitated its ultimate collapse. Russian, American and other analysts can attribute the Soviet defeat to internal politics, Afghanistan's terrain and climate and the role of Stinger missiles, but for al-Qa'idah, such technical details are probably secondary.

Al-Qa'idah's reliance on its particular interpretation of history as a guide to future action also might be an example of the widespread phenomenon of planning for the last war, a kind of mental inertia. Jervis, Ernest R. May and Yechezkel Dror all pointed out years ago that this common problem plagues strategic studies, particularly in the United States. Simply put, humans in general and decision-makers in particular naturally look to the past as a guide to the future, and as we have seen already, preconceptions are remarkably resistant to change, even in the face of contrary evidence.²⁹

Historical and psychological inertia are not the only possible reasons for al-Qa'idah's mistaken prediction of America's response to September 11. American foreign policy in general and the Powell/Weinberger Doctrine in particular are complex, both in terms of their various messages and their formulation. For the six interrelated Powell/Weinberger questions to yield responses that would lead to the commitment of U.S. forces abroad, a great deal of analysis, money,

²⁹ Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 217-87; idem, "Perceiving and Coping with Threat," *Psychology and Deterrence*, 13, 22; Ernest R. May, "Lessons" of the Past: The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973); Yehezkel Dror, *Crazy States* (Lexington, MA: Heath Lexington Books, 1971), 4-5.

planning and international, domestic and public diplomacy are required.³⁰ The painful lessons of Vietnam aside, this is appropriate for a large democracy blessed with the power and burdened with the tremendous international responsibilities of the United States. Especially in cases where the questions' answers are not so clear, however, coming to a decision to commit takes time, a fact that makes employing a tit-for-tat strategy against terrorist (and other) provocations difficult.³¹ Additionally, since the United States is not at war in the traditional sense, and because the United States tends to be risk averse,³² the status quo means not engaging in military action. Jervis notes the common phenomenon of preconceptions distilling such complex policy grays into black-and-white:

But even if the actions are carried out as the decision-maker wants them to, precision is often defeated by the screen of the other side's perceptual predispositions. As a result, while subtlety and sophistication in a policy are qualities which observers usually praise and statesmen seek, these attributes may lead the policy to fail because they increase the chance that it will not be perceived as intended. It is hard enough to communicate straightforward and gross threats; it will often be impossible to successfully apply complex bargaining tactics which involve detailed and abstruse messages. Decision-makers often underestimate these difficulties and so try to develop plans that are too intricate to get across. Furthermore, because it is very hard to tell what others have perceived, statesmen often fail to see that they have failed to communicate.³³

³⁰ A September 1998 Congressional Research Report for Congress specifically lists [the possibility of a lack of] "consultation with Congress over policy shifts [i.e., the move to a proactive, deterrent policy towards terrorist groups] which may result in an undeclared war" as a "central issue of concern." Perl, *Terrorism: U.S. Response to Bombings in Kenya and Tanzania: A New Policy Direction?*, 5-6.

³¹ Davis, "Synthetic Cognitive Modeling."

³² Dror, *Crazy States*, 17.

³³ Jervis, "Deterrence and Perception," 27. See also Jervis, "Perceiving and Coping with Threat," 18-24; and Richard Ned Lebow, "Conclusions," *Psychology and Deterrence*, 205-6. Brian Michael

Preconceived notions, then, not only are resistant to change and affect the reading of history, as discussed above, but also serve as a crucible for incoming complex policies, boiling them down to an essence remarkable for its similarity to the preconceived notions themselves, and often having little to do with their senders' intended messages. With the details and nuances of American foreign policy lost in the mix, its inherent reluctance to use force – which Americans usually see as a sign of power, prosperity and responsibility – only confirmed al-Qa'idah's low estimation of American deterrence credibility.

At the most fundamental level, credibility is based on the perception of commitment. That is, in order for deterrence to be achieved, the challenger must believe that the defender will turn threat into reality, as discussed by Thomas C. Schelling:

As a rule, one must threaten that he *will* act, not that he *may* act, if the [deterrent] threat fails. To say that one *may* act is to say that one *may not*, and to say this is to confess that one has kept the power of decision – that one is not committed. To say only that one *may* carry out the threat, not that one certainly will, is to invite the opponent to guess whether one will prefer to punish himself and his opponent or to pass up the occasion.³⁴

Jenkins made this point in the context of dealing with terrorists over twenty years ago. See his *Talking to Terrorists* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1982), 7, 15.

³⁴ Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 187. It bears mentioning that the stakes here are very high. Glenn H. Snyder and Paul Diesing point out the dilemma decision-makers face: "commitment maximizes the chances of winning but flirts with disaster [i.e., going to war]; option preservation maximizes the chances of avoiding war or extreme levels of destruction but risks being bested in the crisis contest of wills." *Conflict among Nations: Bargaining, Decision Making, and System Structure in International Crises* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 212.

By definition, for deterrence to work the defender must have both the commitment and the capability to punish. In this light, the verdict on the Powell/Weinberger Doctrine is decidedly mixed. To the extent that when the United States goes to war, it will use its unequaled military force to "go in to win," the doctrine enhances deterrence. That is, there are probably few that doubt the American capability to inflict tremendous damage on an opponent that can be identified and targeted. On the other hand, as noted above, prior to September 11, genuine American inaction as well as the perceived and actual hand-wringing about the use of force and the generally lumbering speed of American foreign policy have left the unmistakable impression that when attacked the United States *may or may not* respond with force, either because of a predilection for half-way measures or because of the difficulties in reliably targeting al-Qa'idah. This half of the doctrine, reflecting what is perceived as an uncertain American commitment, undermines deterrence.

The implications are ominous. Jervis posits that since preconceptions are resistant to change, "trying to change a reputation for low resolve [i.e., the way al-Qa'idah has interpreted U.S. behavior] will be especially costly because statements and symbolic actions are not likely to be taken seriously."³⁵ Additionally, as Richard Ned Lebow notes, "Even the most elaborate efforts to demonstrate prowess and resolve may prove insufficient to discourage a challenger who is convinced that a use of force is necessary to preserve vital strategic and political interests."³⁶ In this light, flexible deterrent options (e.g., moving carrier battle groups and other mobilizations and other types of muscle flexing, even, evidently, launching cruise missiles) and forms of coercive

³⁵ Jervis, "Deterrence and Perception," 9.

³⁶ Lebow, "Deterrence: A Political and Psychological Critique," 39.

diplomacy are likely to be severely constrained and/or ineffective, and seen as indications of weakness.³⁷

Can It Be Done?

Having reviewed some plausible reasons why al-Qa'idah was not deterred, the question remains – is it possible to deter such an organization? The answer is hardly straightforward. As noted in the preceding pages, a number of necessary conditions for deterrence were not met prior to September 11. These conditions alone, though, are insufficient to guarantee deterrence. In the remainder of this chapter we will examine a number of these and additional conditions and their limitations as well as a mix of methodologies for assessing the likelihood of their sufficiency in various circumstances. In the next chapter, we will discuss specific policy options and methods with an eye to maximizing deterrence success.

In his insightful, though unfortunately titled, *Crazy States*,³⁸ Dror discusses both the desirability of and difficulty in achieving deterrence against such actors – he explicitly includes terrorist groups in this category – and lists a number of important considerations when trying to do so. First among these is that the challenger must be instrumentally rational, which we believe to be self-evident about al-Qa'idah. The group very obviously makes use of the means at its disposal – wealth, manpower, technical know-how, various grievances held by some, many or all Muslims, etc. – to fight an asymmetric battle against the United States, which it holds responsible for a rather specific list of offenses,

³⁷ Two examples of backfiring FDOs are the deployment of unarmed aircraft to Saudi Arabia in 1979 and the exercise carried out in July 1990 in the Persian Gulf. See Paul K. Davis, "Improving Deterrence in the Post-Cold War Era: Some Theory and Implications for Defense Planning," *New Challenges for Defense Planning*, Paul K. Davis, ed. (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1994), 219-220. See also Dror, *Crazy States*, 80-1.

³⁸ Dror makes very clear that he does not use the term "crazy" in the common, psychological sense. Neither does the word "state" limit the scope of his analysis to state actors. That is, a crazy state need not be a state and it "can behave rationally in the instrumental sense... it can pick instruments which are highly effective for its (crazy) goals." See Dror, *Crazy States*, 23-30.

including the stationing of American forces in Saudi Arabia.³⁹ Al-Qa'idah's terrorist actions against the United States are, from its perspective, a straightforward attempt at compellance.

Bin Laden's acute awareness of variously resonant grievances and their incorporation into his televised and printed statements suggest strongly that he and his group, like Hamas, Hizbullah, the Algerian FIS and other local Islamist groups, have earthly audiences and interests, and act on their behalf as well as in the name of God. One of the primary problems he purports to want to correct is very much of this world – preserving the material (and mineral) wealth of the Arabian peninsula and distributing it to those outside the Saudi family. The timing of his mentioning the suffering in Iraq, Palestine and among the "hundreds of thousands of the unemployed [university] graduates [in Saudi Arabia]"⁴⁰ is undoubtedly practical, which is not to say insincere or illegitimate. The fact that these points are included in statements that bin Laden goes to great lengths to distribute widely (and in high quality, e.g., in well-produced videos)⁴¹ illustrates a very rational need for public support.

Dror goes on to note that crazy states are prone to high-risk policies, a fact that makes deterrence against such attackers particularly difficult.⁴² Indeed, the ideal deterrence situation would be the inverse, pitting a risk-averse challenger against

³⁹ Magnus Ranstorp, "Interpreting the Broader Context and Meaning of Bin-Laden's *Fatwa*," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 21 (1998): 325.

⁴⁰ Bin Laden, "Declaration of War." Joseph Kostiner notes that the Islamist opposition in Saudi Arabia in the 1990s had as a common denominator "their academic background, mostly students, academics or higher education graduates working as professionals or administrators, and who could be regarded as members of the new 'middle class.'" Joseph Kostiner, "State, Islam and Opposition in Saudi Arabia: The Post-Desert Storm Phase," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 8.2 (Summer 1996): 80.

⁴¹ John L. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 21.

⁴² Dror, *Crazy States*, 81.

a (somewhat) risk-seeking (or at least so perceived) defender.⁴³ That said, classifying al-Qa'idah as risk-seeking simply because of the suicidal actions of a very small number of its members is a gross oversimplification. First of all, suicide is not necessarily irrational, nor is having the group's pawns kill themselves (Did the use of kamikaze pilots make the Japanese irrational?). As for the al-Qa'idah leadership and fighters in Afghanistan, while they might be less risk-averse than the United States, this is not to say that they are necessarily risk-seeking – especially at the tactical level; they too have demonstrated risk-averse behavior. Namely, when given the opportunity to fight American forces head-to-head (as was claimed to be hoped-for in earlier bin Laden statements), many in al-Qa'idah retreated, hid and/or tried to slip out of the country. That is, they did their best to *survive*, rather than martyr themselves in battle with the Americans. Similarly, in April 2002, even among the Palestinians holed up in the Jenin refugee camp who declared that they would fight the Israelis to the death, the majority (more than 1,000) chose to surrender.⁴⁴ Reportedly, Hizbulah went so far as to offer to trade a captive Israeli businessman in exchange for Israel's sparing the lives of the last 100 Palestinians holding out in the camp.⁴⁵ For many in both al-Qa'idah and the Palestinian groups (and Hizbulah), their ostensibly risk-seeking behavior is constrained by very reasonable and not uncommon bounds, a fact that bodes well for deterrence.

To hedge against a risk-seeking (or, for our purposes, less risk-averse) crazy state adversary, Dror adds three more requirements to his deterrence substrategy.⁴⁶

⁴³ See Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966, 36-43.

⁴⁴ Amos Harel and Amira Hass, "1,000 Palestinians Surrender to IDF in Jenin," *Ha'aretz English Edition* 11 April 2002, Internet:
<http://www.haaretzdaily.com/hasen/objects/PrintArticleEn.jhtml?itemNo=150700>. See also Seth Gitell, "Turning Point," *The New Republic* 10 April 2002, Internet:
<http://www.tnr.com/docprint.mhtml?I=express&s=gitell041002>.

⁴⁵ "Hezbollah: End Jenin Action in Exchange for Captive Israeli," Associated Press 11 April 2002.

⁴⁶ Dror, *Crazy States*, 81-2.

The first is aiming the deterrent threat at targets held dear by the challenger. Dror suggests targeting large parts of the population, the ruling elite, or the leaders themselves. These are plausible targets and though a group like al-Qa'idah does not have a formal constituent population the way a national government does, the fact that bin Laden's actions and statements betray his need for public support suggests that that public might be used against him as well. While Al-Qa'idah does not have major targets of value as does a state (e.g., power plants, permanent bases, big ticket hardware), it does have other worldly interests that can also be considered for targeting. We shall return to the specifics of this point in the next chapter.

Dror's second and third conditions for deterring an ideologically driven, relative risk-seeker are related to the subject of commitment and echo the observations, noted above, of both Jervis and Lebow:

[1.] Credibility has to be achieved through obvious actions that cannot be ignored even by highly biased ideologically shaped perceptions of reality. Therefore, declarations and minor symbolic acts cannot [be] relied upon to establish credibility for a massive countercraziness deterrence....

[2.] It is not enough that deterrence should be perceived as possible or even highly probable. Deterrence has to be assured, especially when the involved crazy state has a high-risk propensity. Visible irreversible commitments to undertake defined actions in clearly identified circumstances are, therefore, required.... Because of the differences in culture between crazy and normal states, no tacit signals can be relied upon.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Dror, *Crazy States*, 82. The need for costly or risky actions as a means to establish deterrent credibility is also discussed in Schelling, *Arms and Influence*; Robert Jervis, *The Logic of Images in International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970); and James D. Fearon, "Signaling Foreign Policy Interests: Tying Hands versus Sinking Costs," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41.1 (February 1997): 68-90.

What stands out in the literature is that in discussions of the variety of sources of deterrence failure noted above – ideological or religious biases, mental inertia, overconfidence, lost complexity of messages, risk-seeking behavior – the prescription nevertheless remains constant: demonstrated, unequivocal, consistent and automatic commitment to make good on the threat of unacceptable violence upon the challenger.⁴⁸ Again, this is easier to do against a state than a cellular terrorist group or network, but these latter rarely act without the assistance of a former. Operation Enduring Freedom, while not yet complete, has demonstrated that both can be credibly, forcefully and painfully attacked when it has been decided to do so.

Speed is also of the essence. Arquilla and Davis emphasize the importance of challenger initiative in deciding whether or not to attack, and note further that in the cases they examined the initiative was restricted by the defender only when the military was brought to bear on the problem. They conclude that failing to do so early-on “may actually encourage aggression.”⁴⁹ Until September 11, al-Qa’idah undoubtedly held the initiative vis-à-vis the United States.⁵⁰

Unfortunately, this does not mean that simply applying more force in advance of or in response to terrorist acts will end the problem of a group like al-Qa’idah, for as Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke put it, “The process of interpretation is far more important for the correctness of the perception than the

⁴⁸ See Lebow, “Deterrence: A Political and Psychological Critique,” 40; Jervis, “Deterrence and Perception,” 9.

⁴⁹ John Arquilla and Paul K. Davis, *Extended Deterrence, Compellence and the “Old World Order,”* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1992), 30; Davis and Arquilla, *Thinking about Opponent Behavior*, 13.

⁵⁰ To some extent, by their nature terrorist groups will always maintain the initiative. Even with the massive response to al-Qa’idah in Afghanistan that has kept the organization’s manpower preoccupied with survival, “sleeper cells” in the United States and elsewhere, while possibly under greater pressure from law enforcement, nevertheless control the initiative as pertains to the attack or attacks that they are planning.

inherent strength or clarity of the stimuli.⁵¹ In fact, when dealing with such groups, the threat or use of force carries significant risks as well. Specifically, such a group might have turned to violence in the first place because it viewed the status quo to be less acceptable than taking on the risk of a massive American response.⁵² It is possible that bin Laden and other al-Qa'idah decision-makers understood that the U.S. would respond more or less as it did to the September 11 attacks, but less effectively and with less support, and were willing to risk it because of the perceived weight of their grievances against the United States. It might be that al-Qa'idah feels *that* strongly about the Saudi regime and the presence of American forces in the kingdom. If this is the case, the kind of deterrent threat discussed above might actually increase the sense of injustice and/or desperation and thus the risk-seeking of al-Qa'idah.⁵³

Similarly, if and when overwhelming force is used to achieve the goal of wiping out an organization like al-Qa'idah and destroying all it holds dear, a likely result is a situation in which the surviving group members – and there will always be at least some survivors – have nothing left to lose (i.e., the defender burns the challenger's bridges – *a la* Schelling – for him) and no choice but to fight. Terrorists in this position may be both strategically undeterable and virtually unconstrained in their potential use of violence. Such "brutalized groups" comprise one of the main categories Ehud Sprinzak considers likely to

⁵¹ George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy*, 573.

⁵² This is reminiscent of the Syrian/Egyptian decision to go to war in 1973 and the Japanese decision to attack Pearl Harbor, cases in which the defender's military superiority were beyond question. See Lebow, "Conclusions," *Psychology and Deterrence*, 214-5.

⁵³ Lebow, "Deterrence: A Political and Psychological Critique," 27. An example of this phenomenon is the American-Japanese interaction prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor. For an analysis see Lebow, "Conclusions," *Psychology and Deterrence*, 221-3. Davis and Arquilla also discuss factors behind the variability in risk acceptance. See Davis and Arquilla, *Thinking about Opponent Behavior*, 14.

make use of chemical, biological or nuclear weapons.⁵⁴ Though it is difficult to assess al-Qa'idah's current state of mind or organizational effectiveness accurately, from the open-source material it does seem likely that the group could fall into this category. Having failed to deter the September 11 attacks, the United States may now find that the force of its reaction has removed the prospect of deterring al-Qa'idah at all. Perception and preconceptions play a role here too, as noted by Gordon H. McCormick:

It is usually only when a nation is faced with military defeat, or in victory suffers such staggering losses that change is forced upon it, that the catalyst is provided to re-examine its strategic assumptions. Even under these circumstances, however, the process of re-examination and reform is colored by cultural and historical imperatives over which the nation has little cognizance and less control.”⁵⁵

Linking these two cases together is the fact that for terrorists who have no interest in or prospects for non-violent political participation (as opposed to domination) as a means of advancing their goals – especially when these goals are of a holistic, religious nature – quitting is simply not an option. This is not always easy to see. Thus, in the third week of military operations in Afghanistan, one member of the Joint Staff expressed that he was “a bit surprised at how doggedly they’re [the Taliban] hanging on to their – to power.... For Mullah Omar to not see the inevitability of what will happen surprises me.”⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ehud Sprinzak, “The Great Superterrorism Scare,” *Foreign Policy* Fall 1998, Internet: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/issue_SeptOct 2001/sprinzaksuperterrorism.html.

⁵⁵ Gordon H. McCormick, “Surprise, Perceptions, and Military Style,” *Orbis* 26.4 (Winter 1983): 835.

⁵⁶ “DoD News Briefing – Rear Adm. Stufflebeam,” 24 October 2001, Internet: http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Oct2001/t10242001_t1024stu.html.

While some members of terrorist groups might have mercenary or other less "pure" motives, most cannot just retire to the private sector. Brian Michael Jenkins points out that terrorist groups tend to be populated by self-selectors who are attracted by the prospects for action and for whom the idea of renouncing violence would be organizationally suicidal: "The broader and vaguer the stated goals of an organization (e.g., world domination in the name of a religion), the more that it is the violence that holds the group together and the more difficult it is for the group to quit. On the other hand, the more precise and the more achievable the political goals of the group, the easier it is for the group to quit."⁵⁷ Fighting groups like al-Qa'idah might be necessary, but such warfare will not deter the hardest-core membership of the group and is actually likely to lead group members to employ even greater violence. For them, engagement validates their group's *raison d'être*. This does not change the opening assumption of the chapter (i.e., that al-Qa'idah would not have attacked if it knew the United States would respond as it did) for al-Qa'idah undoubtedly wanted to engage the United States on the terms it understood to prevail (i.e., with very limited or ineffective American responses). This is also not an argument against the use of force against terrorist groups. The point is simply that the deterrent value of such fighting might be extremely small.

The obvious question here is How can policy-makers determine the appropriate strategy and minimize the likelihood of such deterrence backfires? For even if it were possible to undertake conventional deterrent actions that were so powerful that they completely defied subjective interpretation (a highly improbable proposition), it would still be necessary to know if these actions were likely to end up damaging rather than ensuring deterrence. This distinction takes place in

⁵⁷ Brian Michael Jenkins, personal interview, 14 April 2002. Bruce Hoffman, on the other hand, points out that there are examples of terrorist groups whose members were demobilized through what might best be termed an incentive package. See Bruce Hoffman, "All You Need Is Love," *The Atlantic Monthly* December 2001, Internet: <http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/2001/12/hoffman.htm>.

the minds of the challengers, and as Jenkins put it, "We do not have an x-ray of a man's soul." Fortunately, we do have analytical tools that can assist us in seeing through an opponent's eyes with an improved, useful degree of clarity.

Neustadt and May's placement methodology is one such tool.

In the next chapter, we shall present a number of specifics for putting the prescriptive ideas outlined in this chapter into practice, focusing specifically on al-Qa'idah, but with obvious implications for confronting other similarly motivated and operating groups.

CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS: THE ERA OF "CONSTRAINTMENT"

Placement and Its Obstacles

Especially since groups like al-Qa'idah, Hamas and others do rely on the public for support and consequently maintain a public profile, complete with interviews and both printed and broadcast declarations, we have a tremendous amount of even open-source material which, combined with classified information, can be used for very rich placement. For example, the two situations detailed in the previous chapter in which deterrence can backfire (i.e., an unacceptable status quo and/or an opponent on the verge of extinction) have challenger desperation in common. The frequency, tone and content of public statements, for example, can contribute to the picture of a group or individual's desperation. Jordan's King Hussein provides a good example of an obviously highly pressured leader during the Gulf War. More recent examples can be found in the statements of and interviews with bin Laden since September 11 (and especially after the fighting in Afghanistan began on October 7) and in the public declarations of Yasser Arafat since the fall of 2000 in general and during Israel's Operation Defensive Shield in the spring of 2002 in particular.¹

Sensing desperation is not the only, nor even the main role placement can play in formulating an effective deterrence strategy. At its heart, placement is part of a larger effort to see ourselves, and in this instance the threat we pose, through the eyes of the challenger. This is a daunting task, requiring insight gained through an appreciation of religion, culture, history, psychology, politics and more. Any study of al-Qa'idah, for example, would be incomplete without understanding the dynamics of dynastic rule in Saudi Arabia, what it means to be a Saudi citizen, the pervasive view of having God on the side of Islam and of the

inferiority of Judaism and Christianity and the resultant interpretations of past American decision-making. For example, the American decision to disengage from Somalia appears to have been the result of a fairly straightforward cost-benefit analysis. In the eyes of Usama bin Laden, however, it was nothing less than a confirmation of an unavoidable destiny ordained by God Himself. It is not enough to read a bin Laden declaration to this effect and dismiss it as “hype,” since the “real” truth lies in the cost-benefit analysis. This type of psychologically soothing “we’re right, they’re wrong” approach is particularly commonplace in op-ed pieces. While the cost-benefit analysis might be, in fact, what led to the American decision, in terms of deterrence what matters is not how the decision was made, but how it was understood. It must be remembered that the onus is not on the challenger to prove his rationality. Rather, it is upon the defender to understand the challenger’s rationality and tailor deterrence decisions and messages accordingly.² While most of the criticism of the intelligence community has focused on the lack of warning prior to September 11,³ an equally important shortfall is the failure to grasp just how consistently ineffective, or at least incoherent, the American deterrent message was. In fact, these two intelligence tasks are almost one and the same. Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke point out that in practice “there are important limits on the extent to which the defender can rely on feedback to assess the adequacy of his deterrence effort. Under these circumstances, the defender is necessarily dependent upon intelligence indications that his adversary is getting ready to challenge the status quo in order to evaluate and improve, if necessary, his

¹ Of course, it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions from public statements alone, which have multiple functions and intended audiences and are thus open to many interpretations.

² One methodology for doing so in the context of states and nuclear deterrence is presented in Caroline F. Ziemke, Philippe Loustaunau and Amy Alrich, *Strategic Personality and the Effectiveness of Nuclear Deterrence* (Alexandria, VA: Institute for Defense Analyses, 2000, 2001) and Caroline F. Ziemke, *Strategic Personality and the Effectiveness of Nuclear Deterrence: Deterring Iraq and Iran* (Alexandria, VA: Institute for Defense Analyses, 2001).

deterrence posture.⁴ Thus, early warning is a vital intelligence function with both strategic and tactical implications.

Recognizing the need for in-depth knowledge of a challenger in order to custom-make deterrence decisions is not new. Neither is the awareness that doing so is difficult and without guarantees – there remains no x-ray to a man’s soul.⁵ Having said that, it is apparent that psychological hurdles have prevented even accurate and reliable knowledge from being used to its full potential. We mentioned above the obviously low regard bin Laden had for American deterrent power. Why didn’t American decision-makers take bin Laden’s statements seriously and respond with more vigor before September 11? The answer to this question is obviously complex – standing in the way of such a response were serious issues of international and federal law, state sovereignty and the limitations of intelligence, to name but a few. Additionally, though, there appear to have been various forms of psychologically caused blindness, or at least a narrowing of vision. Human beings – whether Americans or Saudis, Christians or Muslims – tend to believe that others see them as they see themselves. Americans see the reluctance to use force as a sign of responsibility and strength, and we assume that others see it in the same light. We assume that our ability and credibility are self-evident, and often dismiss nay-sayers as

³ See United States, Congress, House, Subcommittee on Terrorism and Homeland Security, *Counterterrorism Intelligence Capabilities and Performance Prior to 9-11*, Executive Summary 17 July 2002, Internet: <http://intelligence.house.gov/Word/THSReport071702.doc> .

⁴ Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 568.

⁵ See, for example, Richard Ned Lebow, “Conclusions,” *Psychology and Deterrence*, Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow, Janice Gross Stein, eds. (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 206-11, 217; Phil Williams, “Nuclear Deterrence,” *Contemporary Strategy I: Theories and Concepts* Second Edition, John Baylis et al., (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1987), 120; Alexander L. George, “The ‘Operational Code’: A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making,” *International Studies Quarterly* 13.2 (June 1969): 190-222.

delusional, crazy or just wrong.⁶ Bin Laden and his followers dismiss “infidels” using the same terms. The goal should not be to prove who is right and who is wrong. In the arena of public and diplomatic debate, yes, right and wrong is a useful construct. When entering the strategy planning fray, however, such thinking must be left at the door.

In addition to the mirror imaging noted above, it has been observed that analyses of potential and actual challengers are often crippled by the psychological obstacle known as “the tyranny of the best estimate,” and which reflects the defender’s stubborn preconceptions and wishful thinking.⁷ To remedy this problematically narrow and often inaccurate type of assessment, Paul K. Davis and John Arquilla, in a series of RAND studies prepared for the Joint Staff in the wake of the Gulf War, suggest an analytic hedging strategy to reduce the uncertainties inherent in such analysis.⁸ Their methodology entails the development of multiple behavioral models of a challenger,⁹ and while based on a host of more-or-less universal (among the “limitedly rational”)¹⁰ behavior

⁶ Robert Jervis, “Perceiving and Coping with Threat,” *Psychology and Deterrence*, 29; Lebow, “Conclusions,” 210.

⁷ Paul K. Davis and John Arquilla, *Deterring or Coercing Opponents in Crisis: Lessons from the War with Saddam Hussein* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1991), 2.

⁸ Paul K. Davis and John Arquilla, *Deterring or Coercing Opponents*; idem, *Thinking about Opponent Behavior in Crisis and Conflict: A Generic Model for Analysis and Group Discussion* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1991); John Arquilla and Paul K. Davis, *Extended Deterrence, Compellence and the “Old World Order,”* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1992).

⁹ The methodology is akin to exploratory modeling, in which a universe of plausible, but uncertain outcomes is mapped in order to identify favorable solutions that are robust across outcomes. In practice, Davis and Arquilla have found that when dealing with heads of state, it is rarely necessary to create more than two main models – that of an “incrementalist” and that of a “conqueror” – to appreciate “the most important alternative plausible trains of thought by the opponent.” Davis and Arquilla, *Deterring or Coercing Opponents in Crisis*, 10-11. We will not create full, formal models of bin Laden here. Such models would be useful, as it is not immediately obvious that the two-model approach that Davis and Arquilla have found sufficient for heads of state is appropriate for the head of a terrorist group. That said, the idea behind the methodology – exploring alternative modes of thought for challengers – is consistent with the recommendations in the psychology literature and which lie at the heart of this entire study.

¹⁰ Davis and Arquilla, *Thinking about Opponent Behavior*, 8-9.

patterns, specifically recognizes the that “the background and culture of a particular opponent is often critical in making judgments.”¹¹ The combination of the multiple model methodology suggested by Davis and Arquilla with the placement methodology of Neustadt and May yields a solid framework for understanding defender deterrence policy decisions from the point of view of the challenger, making use of culturally and historically relevant information while providing a measure of rigorous protection against the weaknesses of often speculative area expertise.¹² Davis and Arquilla are explicit in recognizing these weaknesses: *“regional specialists should be asked to describe all the players, ideas, factors, and possibilities (including, importantly, ones they do not regard as likely); they should not be relied upon for high-confidence predictions and should not be encouraged to make them lightly.”*¹³ For their part, Neustadt and May hold no illusions about placement; they describe it as providing a sophisticated guess for decision-makers.¹⁴ Employing these complementary methodologies offers an even greater level of sophistication and, hopefully, accuracy.

Operation Enduring Freedom’s legacy will depend ultimately on just how enduring its deterrent message is: merely wiping out many al-Qa’idah members will not suffice. The overt statements of American officials and the massive show of force and resolve in Afghanistan and to a lesser degree in the Philippines and elsewhere, combined with large-scale, global law enforcement efforts suggest that the American response to the September 11 attacks could be

¹¹ Davis and Arquilla, *Deterring or Coercing Opponents in Crisis*, 78.

¹² Ibid., 39 n12. Davis and Arquilla’s methodology was “predicted” in more abstract terms more than 20 years earlier by Alexander L. George, writing about the usefulness of Leites’s operational code: “Knowledge of the actor’s approach to calculating choice of action does *not* provide a simple key to explanation and prediction; but it can help the researcher to and the policy planner to ‘bound’ the alternative ways in which the subject may perceive different types of situations and approach the task of making a rational assessment of alternative courses of action.” Alexander L. George, “The Operational Code”: 200. Emphasis in the original.

¹³ Davis and Arquilla, *Thinking about Opponent Behavior*, 21. Emphasis in the original.

seen as a new approach to counter-terrorism strategy. While it might be too late to deter al-Qa'idah specifically, current American actions undoubtedly are being studied carefully by al-Qa'idah and other terrorist groups around the world. In the remainder of this chapter, we shall examine a number of policy options with an eye to meeting America's strategic goal of deterring would-be challengers, focusing specifically on counter-terrorist actions aimed at various elements of terrorist systems, including individual terrorist leaders and the societal bases of support for terrorist groups (both prescribed by Dror), and the potential these actions hold for enhancing or detracting from deterrence. We shall then discuss possible American and allied actions that might have more general deterrent effects on entire terrorist systems.

Targeting Individual Terrorist Leaders, Technical Specialists and Ruling Elites

The deterrent value of targeting individuals and members of the ruling elite has been the subject of some speculation in studies of Middle Eastern conflicts. Gabriel Ben Dor posits that such targeting has been an effective deterrent in past wars, noting that the threat in 1973 to the Egyptian Third Army, "based on an officer corps consisting of the sons of the ruling elite," had a far greater impact on Egyptian decision-making than did the economic damage caused by the War of Attrition in 1969-70. Ben Dor goes on to suggest that Saddam Hussein's decision not to use chemical weapons stemmed from his fear that doing so would lead to an allied response that would not only unseat him, but threaten him personally.¹⁵

As part of a policy that has both coercive and deterrent goals, Israel has targeted specific leaders and technical specialists of terrorist organizations for decades,

¹⁴ Neustadt and May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision-Makers* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), 159.

with mixed results. Best known, perhaps, was the decision to hunt down the members of the Black September PLO faction that were involved in the attack at the Munich Olympics in September, 1972. While all of those targeted were eventually killed (it took almost six and a half years to catch up with the most elusive of the group's leaders), the operation came with considerable costs in terms of manpower, resources, a short-lived attempt to counter-assassinate Israeli intelligence officers and the death of an unfortunate victim of mistaken identity.¹⁶

In recent years, and especially since the re-ignition of violence in late 2000, Israel has continued to target the leaders and technical specialists of Islamist groups, primarily in the West Bank and Gaza. Here too the results have been mixed. On the negative side, in a culture where being placed high on Israel's most wanted list is a badge of honor and martyrdom is exalted (even by family members),¹⁷ the assassination – or attempted assassination – of individuals, which has repeatedly

¹⁵ Gabriel Ben Dor, "Arab Rationality and Deterrence," *Deterrence in the Middle East: Where Theory and Practice Converge*, Aharon Klieman and Ariel Levite, eds. (Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, 1993), 88-9.

¹⁶ Dan Raviv and Yossi Melman, *Every Spy a Prince: The Complete History of Israel's Intelligence Community* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1990), 184-94; Bob Simon, "An Eye for an Eye," CBS News 20 November 2001, Internet: <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2001/11/20/60II/main318655.shtml>.

¹⁷ Families of suicide attackers receive approximately \$25,000 from Saddam Hussein through Hamas or Islamic Jihad. According to the Saudi embassy in Washington, DC, Saudi Arabia makes payments of \$5,333 to the families of "martyrs" from a fund managed by Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz. See Mohammed Daraghmeh, "Iraq Boosts Suicide Bomber Payment," Associated Press 3 April 2002; Martin Himmel, "Making Martyrs," *Online NewsHour* 19 March 2002, Internet: http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle_east/jan-june02/martyr_3-19.html; Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Great Terror," *The New Yorker* 25 March 2002, Internet: http://www.newyorker.com/printable/?fact/020325fa_FACT1; Pamela Hess, "Saudi Arabia Sets Aside \$50M for 'Martyrs,'" UPI 9 April 2002. Perhaps most striking is the apparent degree of parental support for sons (and occasionally daughters) committing suicide attacks *even when known about in advance*: "I cried for a whole month every time I looked at him [her son, Mohammed Farhat, killed in a suicidal active shooter attack in Gaza in March, 2002]. I would tell him not to let my tears stop him from going on his mission...." Hala Jaber, "Inside the World of the Palestinian Suicide Bomber," *The Sunday Times* 24 March 2002, Internet: <http://www.sunday-times.co.uk/printFriendly/0,2-524-245592,00.html>. This appears to go beyond the normal process of parental reconciliation with the reasons behind the death of a child at war.

come with collateral casualties, has served as a rallying point for revenge-seeking surviving group members. The question as to which side's attacks precipitate the other's quickly devolves into one of chicken and egg. Additionally, as demonstrated by the assassination of both Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 and of Rehavam Ze'evi in 2001, it is possible to successfully counter-target the Israeli leadership as well. Finally, as the groups facing Israel have become increasingly cellular in nature, targeting individuals has become less akin to the removal of vital links in a chain and more akin to eliminating nodes in a redundant network – the organizations have suffered setbacks, but have not fallen apart.¹⁸

On the positive side, however, obliterating these groups by means of assassination is not the goal, and such actions have been both disruptive and costly to the targeted organizations.¹⁹ Specifically, among those targeted have been both charismatic leaders and, perhaps more importantly, those whose claim to fame is the possession of useful technical skills, especially bomb-making. While it remains relatively easy to acquire or make explosives, technical expertise, though ultimately replaceable, is in demand on both ends of the technological spectrum. Manufacturing sophisticated weapons obviously requires electrical, electronic, chemical and/or other engineering skills (not to say advanced degrees). Low-tech weapons, especially volatile, improvised explosives like the commonly used triacetone triperoxide (TATP), also demand a measure of know-how for safe handling. Suicide attacks require still others for logistical support.²⁰

¹⁸ Paul R. Pillar, *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 121.

¹⁹ In July 2002, Israel found itself in the unusual (and temporary) position of having killed or arrested all of its "most wanted" terrorists in the West Bank. Amos Harel, "No 'Most Wanted' in West Bank – for Now," *Ha'aretz English Edition* 4 July 2002, Internet:
<http://www.haaretzdaily.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=183022>.

Another value is indirect: aside from the leadership or technical hardships are the unspoken implications of a successful assassination. For the Israelis to be able to identify a specific car carrying a target that was ostensibly hidden amongst a population of over three million suggests that Israel has exceptional technical intelligence capabilities and/or that there are almost certainly leaks from human intelligence sources within the terrorist organizations. That is, even among the leadership of these groups and despite the compartmentalization that they deftly practice, information is passed to the Israelis rapidly enough for them to respond operationally. The bottom line for the terrorists is that they are never certain about whom they can trust, which only heightens their sense of being constantly on the run and thus distracts their mental and physical energies toward self-preservation. The Israelis are not always successful in their assassination efforts, but 100% success is not required to throw a wrench in the works.

The disruptive nature of assassination is fairly clear,²¹ and is complementary to other, less violent means to the same goal, such as economic and political sanctions, which have taken a far greater toll in collateral damage.²² And while these measures raise the costs of action, an important factor in deterrence, whether disruption in general and assassination in particular consistently contribute to deterrence remains less certain. The Palestinians appear to be a case in which the perceived status quo is worse than almost anything that the Israelis can threaten to do. Actions continue to speak louder than words and, with few short-term interruptions, Palestinian terrorism has not been deterred by increasingly aggressive Israeli responses. On the contrary, the various

²⁰ Amanda Ripley, "Why Suicide Bombing Is Now All The Rage," *Time* 15 April 2002, Internet: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1101020415-227546,00.html>.

²¹ Pillar discusses the likely impact on terrorist operations of the deaths caused by the 1998 cruise missile strikes on al-Qa'idah targets in Afghanistan. Pillar, *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 103.

²² Ehud Sprinzak, "Rational Fanatics," *Foreign Policy* September/October 2000, Internet: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/issue_SeptOct 2001/sprinzak.html.

Palestinian terrorist groups continue to compete for destructive primacy. The conclusion in this case, then, is that while targeting the groups' leadership has been operationally disruptive, in the broader picture the groups are largely undeterrable and targeting individuals – even when putting family members at risk – has not changed that basic calculus.²³ Keeping in mind that deterrence is only part of an overall strategy, however, Jenkins believes that those terrorists who pose a threat but are both undeterrable and are unlikely to turn away from violence for whatever reasons (ideology, risk-seeking, lack of alternatives, etc.) nevertheless must be eliminated.²⁴

For groups whose point of departure is less bleak than that of the Palestinians (as might be the case with bin Laden and al-Qa'idah), the targeting of individuals holds greater deterrent potential. As noted above, bin Laden and other members of al-Qa'idah, in making Taliban-led Afghanistan their base of operations, in their efforts to escape the American onslaught, and in the reported claims that they moved their families out of harm's way prior to and immediately after September 11, have demonstrated that extended self-preservation remains a high priority. Even the suicidal among terrorist groups seek death only on their own terms. It is possible that if bin Laden or the leaders of other, similar groups felt that actions against American interests carried a very high likelihood (i.e., carried with it a clear American commitment) of a very high personal cost, deterrence might be more within reach.

Establishing that likelihood is easier said than done, as Israeli successes in locating terrorist leaders might be the exception rather than the rule. Compared to the Sudan or Afghanistan, for example, the West Bank and Gaza are tiny. It

²³ A recent RAND study has concluded that attacks on enemy leadership almost never achieve desired deterrent or coercive effects. The Israeli counter-terrorism case is one of many examples presented. Stephen T. Hosmer, *Operations against Enemy Leaders* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001).

remains very difficult to track down mobile terrorists, especially across often unregulated borders. These difficulties argue against a *declared* policy of assassination in that successes might be so few and far between (note that – as of this writing – Saddam Hussein is still alive and in power and bin Laden's status and whereabouts remain unknown) as to make the policy appear ineffective, thus stripping away much of its deterrent value. Technical and human intelligence will be the key to the ultimate effectiveness of such a policy, which should remain unclaimed.

Collateral Damage and Targeting Populations

Nuclear deterrence is predicated to some degree on the targeting of non-combatants. As Islamist terrorist groups are largely dependent on supportive constituent populations, can the general population be targeted to deter these groups? On the surface, the answer appears straightforward and appealing: if the population is forced to pay a price for the crimes of a terrorist group, popular support will wane and the group will fall in line. Unfortunately, this is unlikely to work in practice. Recent Middle Eastern cases where non-combatants have been punished have not yielded the hoped-for results. Namely, the sanctions on Iraq and the closures of the West Bank and Gaza and the demolition of terrorists' families' homes have not led to any perceptible change in the behavior of either Saddam Hussein or the Palestinian terrorist groups. In both cases, the blame typically has not been placed on these actors, but rather on the shoulders of the United States and Israel, respectively.²⁵

²⁴ Brian Michael Jenkins, personal interview, 14 April 2002.

²⁵ Two cases where the use of overwhelming force against Islamists and their civilian "hosts" did succeed in changing their behavior are the Syrian destruction on the town of Hama in 1982 and the somewhat less brutal Egyptian actions against Islamists in upper Egypt in the late 1990s. Here too, however, it remains an open question whether the population holds the Islamists or the governments responsible for those crackdowns.

Even more strikingly, a recent Gallup survey in Muslim states found that “[i]n every nation in which this question was asked, including Turkey, a majority of those interviewed express the view that the American military action is either largely or completely unjustifiable.” Moreover, in five of the six countries in which the question was asked (Turkey was the exception), “more respondents actually view the U.S. military actions in Afghanistan as largely or totally unjustifiable than voice the same judgment regarding the attacks of Sept. 11.” The perceived motivations for the military action included the stated American reasons,²⁶ but also included the desire to establish and extend political control of the region, to gain control of Afghanistan’s natural resources and to start a war against Muslims and Arabs.²⁷

The misperception of cause and effect at work in these cases has a number of underlying causes. The general sense of resentment and even hatred for the United States and Israel is certainly a factor, as is the psychological inclination to disregard nuanced messages for simpler, more familiar understandings of events. The view of martyrdom and its associated promises of a glorious afterlife is important in this context as well. Equally relevant, however, is the lack of political accountability enjoyed by Middle Eastern rulers in general and by despots and terrorist groups in particular. Very few of the people between Morocco and the Indian border have any meaningful say in who governs them and how. As a result, the tradition of holding government, to say nothing of individual rulers, accountable is weak. Insofar as terrorist groups are sub-state actors, they are able to enjoy the best of all worlds. When they achieve “victories” in their attacks, and when they provide social services in poor communities, they are hailed as heroes. Because they are not official

²⁶ This was the most commonly given reason in four of the countries, but was given by only 25%-31% of respondents.

²⁷ “Many in Islamic World Question Motives for U.S. Military Campaign,” *Gallup Tuesday Briefing* 1 March 2002, Internet: www.gallup.com/poll/tb/goverPubli/20020301b.asp?Version=p .

representatives of a state, they are rarely held accountable for any negative repercussions their actions may bring.²⁸ Even a credible countervalue threat, therefore, seems unlikely to contribute significantly to deterrence. One way this could change would be if terrorists escalated by using chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) weapons, and the U.S. saw fit to respond in kind.

It is also worth noting that terrorist groups' status as sub-state actors makes it harder for the international community to hold them responsible for their actions as well. It is much easier (though not easy) to bring Libyan intelligence agents or Slobodan Milosevic to justice than it is the members of a shadowy, unofficial group. Moreover, responding to terrorist actions by targeting non-combatant populations that did not elect the terrorists to represent them threatens to undermine – in international fora – the very moral high ground that distinguishes the United States from the terrorists themselves. It is perhaps significant that more than 56 years after the end of American involvement in World War II – involvement initiated by Japan – the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki is repeatedly mentioned in Islamist charges against the United States.²⁹ Any use of CBRN weapons obviously would have very long-term political repercussions.

²⁸ One example where a group was held publicly accountable can be seen in the popular outrage after Egyptian Islamists attacked tourists at Luxor. It is unclear whether the anger was the result of moral revulsion or because of the economic damage due to the resultant reduced influx of tourists from abroad, an important source of Egyptian income.

²⁹ Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 63; "Bin Laden: America 'Filled with Fear,'" CNN 7 October 2001, Internet:

<http://www.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/central/10/07/ret.binladen.transcript>. Though not an Islamic state, Japan's role as an Eastern challenger to the West has been an object of admiration for some time. Bernard Lewis, Albert Hourani and others point to the Japanese defeat of the Russians in 1905 as an extremely heartening event in that it marked the first time in the modern era that an Asian army defeated that of a European power. Both authors point out that the Japanese victory inspired Egyptian nationalist leader Mustafa Kamil to write a book in Arabic entitled *The Rising Sun*, while Lewis points out that two Turkish officers put together a five-volume illustrated history of the Russo-Japanese war. Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East and the West* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964), 55; Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1962), 205.

The Bush Doctrine: Getting Allies on Board

Effective counter-terrorism policy, on the military, law enforcement and other fronts, requires a high degree of multilateral cooperation, and the exigencies of responding to September 11 have provided the United States with some strange new bedfellows. The rapid building of coalitions, the spontaneous and orchestrated demonstrations of support and identification from allies in Europe and southeast Asia, NATO's invocation of Article Five of the North Atlantic Treaty and the commitment of allied forces to operations in Afghanistan all contribute to deterrence by demonstrating the breadth of international ostracizing of terrorist groups and the regimes that support them and by raising the costs of using and supporting terrorism. To be sure, the regimes that have been identified as supporters of terrorism are all acutely aware of the fate of the Taliban. At the same time, the behavior of some traditional allies has weakened deterrence. Specifically, official Saudi behavior both before and after September 11 has been particularly disruptive to American efforts to deal with al-Qa'idah.

The lack of legitimate political opposition, combined with the perceived and actual failures of competing political and economic ideologies and practices (e.g., socialism, democracy, etc.) have led to the creation and sustenance of Islamist opposition movements throughout the Muslim Middle East.³⁰ These movements enjoy the advantages of long-established, ubiquitous networks of mosques and religious schools, the above-mentioned lack of formal, political accountability to the populations they serve and the pride of place that is inherent to orthodox claims of legitimacy and authenticity. The religious nature of the Saudi kingdom

³⁰ Jacob Lassner points out that religious opposition to territory-based authority, in fact, has a long history in the Islamic world. Jacob Lassner, *The Middle East Remembered: Forged Identities, Competing Narratives, Contested Spaces* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2000), 113.

in general and of the ruling family's claims to power in particular has made this phenomenon particularly acute there.³¹

Widely discussed in the wake of September 11 is the Saudis' unenviable position. Almost completely dependent on the outside (i.e., Western) world for both income and national defense, they remain permanently engaged at the highest levels with that world. At the same time the ruling family owes its legitimacy to its ideological marriage to the conservative Wahhabi movement and to its role as the Custodians of the Two Holy Mosques (i.e., Mecca and Medina). In the eyes of many Islamists, bin Laden included, this juxtaposition of Islamic religious responsibility with coziness with and reliance on Western powers is unacceptably contradictory.³² The ruling family has worked hard to hedge its bets through a mix of suppressing, co-opting and exporting its opposition,³³ while maintaining its relationships with Western powers, allowing the continued presence of U.S. forces in the kingdom and leaving many of the genuine socioeconomic problems of the kingdom unaddressed.

September 11 demonstrated graphically – and not for the first time – that the Saudis' attempts to please all of the people all of the time has come with tremendous costs for the United States. Specifically, the Saudi blind eye toward

³¹ An insightful study of this phenomenon is Joshua Teitelbaum, *Holier than Thou: Saudi Arabia's Islamic Opposition* (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000).

³² Magnus Ranstorp, "Interpreting the Broader Context and Meaning of Bin-Laden's *Fatwa*," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 21.4: 325. Remarkably, in November 1979, when Saudi Islamists seized control of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, angry mobs attacked the American embassies in Pakistan, Libya, Kuwait and Afghanistan. Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *The Atlantic Monthly* 266.3 (September 1990), Internet: <http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/90sep/rage2.htm>; Fawaz Gerges, *America and Political Islam: Clash of Cultures or Clash of Interests?* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 66.

³³ See Douglas Jehl, "Holy War Lured Saudis as Rulers Looked Away," *New York Times* 27 December 2001, Internet: <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/12/27/international/middleeast/27SAUD.html>; Joshua

the terrorist training and export of the kingdom's sons, the worldwide financing of "charities" with links to terrorist groups and of schools with virulently anti-Western curricula,³⁴ and the direct payments to families of suicide bombers in the West Bank and Gaza all fan the flames of hatred and resentment towards the West and/or facilitate terrorist actions.³⁵ Also relevant in terms of deterrence is the Saudi (and to a lesser extent, Yemeni) foot-dragging and even interference in the American investigations of terrorist actions that took place on Saudi soil or in which Saudis are suspected of complicity.³⁶ So too the refusal to allow American forces to use bases in Saudi Arabia in response to the September 11 attacks.³⁷ Keeping Saudi terrorists beyond the reach of American law enforcement efforts and impeding American efforts to attack terrorist targets means that there is potentially little or no cost to such challengers; predictably, deterrence fails.

American tolerance for Saudi misbehavior has been explained by some as the cost of ensuring regional stability and the unobstructed flow of oil. Though oil remains in many ways the life-blood of the global economy, the American quest for regional stability by supporting corrupt, at times overtly hostile and brutal regimes is proving to be a dangerously myopic policy guideline, one that not only stands in stark opposition to many of the principles upon which the United

Teitelbaum, "Deserted," *The New Republic* 22 October 2001, Internet:
<http://www.thenewrepublic.com/102201/teitelbaum102201.html>.

³⁴ Carl Cameron, "Saudi Arabia Link among Suspect Islamic Charities," Fox News 3 April 2002, Internet: http://foxnews.com/printer_friendly_story/0,3566,49395,00.html. Francis Fukuyama, "Their Target: The Modern World," *Newsweek* January 2002, Internet: <http://www.msnbc.com/news/672448.asp>.

³⁵ Mohammed Daraghmeh, "Iraq Boosts Suicide Bomber Payment"; Pamela Hess, "Saudi Arabia Sets Aside \$50M for 'Martyrs.'"

³⁶ Jehl, "Holy War Lured Saudis as Rulers Looked Away." This apparently includes squandered opportunities to arrest bin Laden and Hizballah/al-Qa'idah operative Imad Mughniyah, responsible for the hijacking of TWA Flight 847 in 1985 as well as the 1983 Beirut embassy bombing. Teitelbaum, "Deserted."

³⁷ Tarek al-Issawi, "Saudis: U.S. Can't Use Air Base," Associated Press 23 September 2001; "Saudi Arabia: No Attacks on Arabs," Associated Press 30 September 2001. For a similar sentiment expressed by the Arab League as a whole, see "Arab League Says US Strikes on Any Members 'Unacceptable,'" AFP 23 September 2001.

States was founded,³⁸ but which also threatens America's long-term deterrent power towards the terrorist groups that feed on the increasingly disaffected populations of ostensibly friendly states. As Bernard Lewis has pointed out, public anti-American feeling in the Middle East is greatest in precisely those states with which the United States has the strongest ties: Egypt and Saudi Arabia, the same states that provided most of the September 11 hijackers.³⁹

Deterrence Is Not Enough

George and Smoke, in their seminal work on deterrence, note that deterrence should not stand alone, but must be supplemented by what they call "inducement."⁴⁰ Without such balance in foreign policy, they point out, "reinforcement of deterrence in a crisis may succeed in deterring the opponent, but at the cost of hardening his conviction that the defender is unresponsive to the legitimate interests that lie behind his effort to obtain a change in the situation. As a result, the initiator may resolve to prepare more effectively for the next round by acquiring additional military or other capabilities with which to neutralize the defender's deterrent threats."⁴¹

Practicing inducement is not the same as accepting the sophistc "root causes of terror" arguments of terrorism's apologists. There are innumerable examples of the dispossessed, disenfranchised, discarded and/or disregarded who have not turned to terrorism. Inducement does, however, offer the potential to improve the status quo and thus reduce the appeal of and perceived need for violence.

³⁸ For a discussion on the historical role of stability in American foreign policy, see Ralph Peters, "Stability, America's Enemy," *Parameters* (Winter 2001-02): 5-20.

³⁹ Bernard Lewis, "The Revolt of Islam," *The New Yorker* 19 November 2001, Internet: http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/?011119fa_FACT2.

⁴⁰ George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy*, 604-10.

⁴¹ George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy*, 579. This is evident, for example, in the Palestinians' increasing efforts to acquire anti-tank and other more advanced weapons in preparation for further conflict with the Israelis.

Some of the issues that bin Laden and al-Qa'idah have adopted as their own are legitimate in absolute terms. The Arab-Israeli conflict, for a host of political, cultural, historical, religious and other reasons, is a malignant source of frustration and humiliation.⁴² The riches of the Saudi royal family, while perhaps not as great as they once were, still dwarf the shrinking per capita income of the kingdom, making the problem of taxation without representation ever more acute. As discussed above, the sanctions on Iraq have been more effective in galvanizing anti-American feeling in the Middle East than they have in weakening Saddam Hussein. A minor Iraqi public relations coup, the sanctions have become a widely felt source of outrage.⁴³

The list of grievances, of course, goes on. Not all of them are legitimate; others are beyond the control of the United States. However, to the extent that the United States takes Middle Eastern humiliations and grievances seriously and works to correct them, it stands to gain in two significant ways. First, it will reduce the costs of maintaining the status quo,⁴⁴ thus raising the relative costs of challenging the American deterrent threat. Second, by doing so, the United States can work to take the rug out from under terrorist groups like al-Qa'idah, which burn public anger for fuel. The importance of inducement as a complement to deterrence underscores the importance of minimizing perceptual biases in analyses of foreign actors: distorted or narrow images can lead decision-

⁴² A poll (of unspecified accuracy or quality) of 2000 Saudi men and women conducted by the *al-Watan* newspaper shortly before Israel's April 2002 incursion into the West Bank found that 60% of Saudis hate the United States (the original Arabic used the word "hate"). Of these, 75% said their hatred was based on U.S. policy vis-à-vis the Israel-Palestinian issue; 20% said it was related to the Gulf War; and the remaining 5% traced its roots to the aftermath of September 11. "Saudi Newspaper Poll Finds 60 Percent of Saudis Hate the United States," Associated Press 8 April 2002.

⁴³ Bernard Lewis, "License to Kill," *Foreign Affairs* November/December 1998, Internet: http://www.foreignaffairs.org/Search/document_briefings.asp?i=19981101facomment1428.xml

⁴⁴ Williams, "Nuclear Deterrence," 116.

makers to focus on and ultimately implement misguided, ineffective or even counterproductive inducement measures.

The combined effects of the two-pronged deterrence/inducement approach will vary in terms of time horizons and where individuals are in the process of joining a terrorist group.⁴⁵ As noted above, in the immediate term, for already active terrorists, especially those in groups with vague, unrealizable goals, neither deterrence nor inducement is likely to have great impact on their actions. For most of them, the die is already cast. Osama bin Laden is not going to "go legit," regardless of what the United States says or does. On the other hand, in the longer term, among those who have not yet joined terrorist groups or those whose commitment has not yet fully crystallized, the deterrence/inducement mix that results in the high likelihood of death plus the creation and development of alternative channels to effect political or social change might shrink the pool of potential terrorist group recruits. In what might be called the medium term, the existential threat to terrorist groups posed by the smaller recruitment base is likely to lead the shrinking nucleus of already committed terrorists to engage in increasingly violent activities as a way of demonstrating their continued potency. Dangerous times are ahead.

The oft-repeated concern about American pressure for political and economic reform, respect for human rights, etc. is that doing so might bring Islamists to power, as almost happened in Algeria in 1991.⁴⁶ The regimes in place now, the argument goes, represent the more stable and familiar lesser of two evils – the devil we know. The concern is not unfounded. Many of the Islamist opposition groups that might assume or seize power (or have already done so, as in Iran

⁴⁵ Brian Michael Jenkins, personal interview, 14 April 2002.

⁴⁶ An example, albeit one that calls for change despite this concern, is Jack Beatty, "The Real Roots of Terror," *The Atlantic Unbound* 5 December 2001, Internet:
<http://www.theatlantic.com/unbound/polipro/pp2001-12-05.htm>.

and in Taliban-led Afghanistan) in the states of the Middle East are overtly hostile to the United States and its interests, have expressed disdain for democracy, threaten to limit the rights of women and minorities and have used terror as a means to achieve political and other ends. Setting aside for the moment that the regimes currently in place are guilty of many of the same offenses,⁴⁷ the dilemma pits the principles of governance enshrined in the Declaration of Independence against the First Amendment separation of church and state, which, while not a foreign policy goal, nevertheless makes the idea of Islamist rule anathema to many American policy-makers.

The foreign policy goal of supporting stable, if not altogether admirable, regimes is based in part on the idea that American governments and businesses have to deal with foreign governments, not with their discontented populations. How these "stable" regimes rule their citizens is often brushed off (in deed if not in word) as "internal affairs." This premise has been shattered, however. Through the use of terrorism, the heretofore voiceless and angry populations of Saudi Arabia and Egypt have found a way to speak directly with the American government and the American people. Their ambassadors to the United States do not have offices in the Saudi and Egyptian chanceries; they crashed airplanes into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and the Pennsylvania countryside. The Saudi government funds these groups in an effort to win their acquiescence, but it is the United States that has ended up paying. Far from being an internal matter, the nature of rule in the states that the United States supports increasingly will be an American problem, one that makes the defense policy goal of deterrence less achievable. Regime stability by itself is no longer an acceptable foreign policy end. Seeing it as such is tantamount to deficit spending the security of future generations of Americans. There is no guarantee, of course,

⁴⁷ See United States, Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – 2001*, Internet:
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/>.

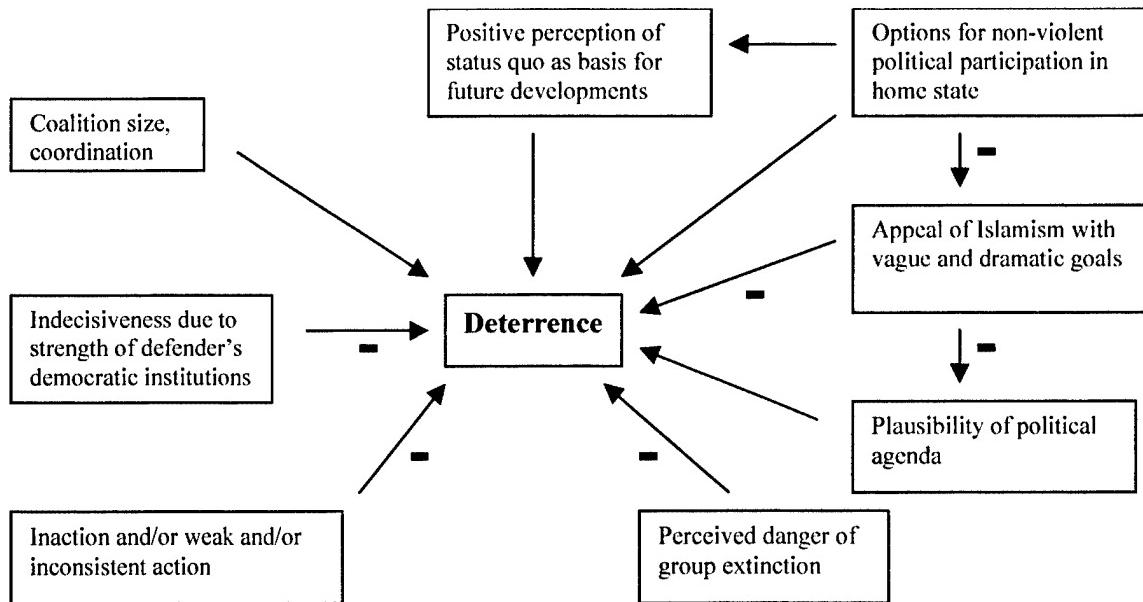
that democrats would replace the current Saudi and Egyptian regimes if the United States withdrew or reduced its support of them, but what is perceived as American complicity in maintaining oppressive rulers would be alleviated.

Implicit in American concerns about regime change is the assumption that given a choice, the populations of Middle Eastern states would elect Islamist parties to power. This does not have to be the case. It is true that today Islamist parties are the most vocal and ready sources of opposition in many Middle Eastern states. As mentioned above, though, this is largely because Islamist parties are the only ones that have been able to survive the suppression of other types of political opposition. A gradual opening of political opportunities for Islamists and non-Islamists alike might very well lead to the eventual benefit of the latter.

Additionally, as pointed out by Graham Fuller and Olivier Roy, in states – even monarchies like Jordan – where Islamist parties have been allowed to participate in politics, they have proven to be quite clearly bound by local norms and rules. It bears mentioning again: Islamist parties are also *nationalist* and *populist* parties. They are both the product of and are required to serve their national traditions and populations.⁴⁸ The influence diagram below summarizes the various factors that influence deterrence towards a movement like al-Qa'idah.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Olivier Roy, "What You Should Know about Islam as a Strategic Factor," *America and the Muslim Middle East*, Philip D. Zelikow and Robert B. Zoellick, eds. (Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute), 36-8; idem, "Islamists in Power," *The Islamism Debate*, Martin Kramer, ed. (Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University, 1997), 80; Graham E. Fuller, "Islamism(s) in the Next Century," *The Islamism Debate*, 142.

⁴⁹ Influence diagrams were first applied to the issue of deterrence in Davis and Arquilla, *Thinking about Opponent Behavior*, 16-17.



Deterring Islamist Terrorist Groups

Containment and Kennan's Crystal Ball

What if Islamist parties came to power nevertheless? Suffice to say that in the Islamic world, as elsewhere, it is far easier to be in the opposition than in power. Once in power, Islamists have become subject to popular expectations as well as (at least external) accountability. Roy, in his *The Failure of Political Islam*, notes that power has led to remarkable practicality and ideological compromise, if not democracy, particularly among Islamists in Iran.⁵⁰ The demands of international relations force even "Islamic" states to play by certain rules. State power provides the rest of the world with a known address, complete with identifiable interests, of the formerly disenfranchised Islamist NGO. It is easier to hold Iran responsible for terrorism it sponsors than it is an NGO like al-Qa'idah. Of course, it provides little consolation to know that if an Islamist opposition group

⁵⁰ Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994). A particularly interesting example of this practicality can be seen in the dramatic success of state-sponsored birth control efforts in Iran, following years of state-encouraged population growth that fed an economically and socially unsupportable 50 percent population increase between 1976 and 1986. Today 60 percent of the Iranian population is under 25. See Jim Muir, "Condoms Help Check Iran Birth Rate," *BBC News* 24 April 2002, Internet:

took power in Saudi Arabia, the United States could, if necessary, attack that resultant state's interests. After all, the United States does not want to bomb oil refineries, it wants to use them.

There is one stable thing about Saudi Arabia, however: it will remain a petroleum-based rentier state for the foreseeable future. Whatever governmental alternative to the Saudi monarchy that might emerge will need to sell oil to the United States and other countries. Frankly, aside from pilgrimage-related revenues, it's all the country has.⁵¹ The kingdom cannot afford to engage in embargo warfare today as it did in the mid-1970s. As Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal put it, "This is like cutting off your nose to spite your face."⁵² Further, while the West is understandably concerned – given its experience with Nazi Germany – about democracy gone bad, the utter dependence of the Middle East on the outside world makes the prospect of a "hijacked" regional polity becoming a similarly threatening world power extremely unlikely. With U.S. troops out of the country and a popularly chosen government, residents of Saudi Arabia will have far less (not to say nothing) to complain about vis-à-vis the United States. Again, in such a situation, the status quo will be more appealing than challenging the United States – augmenting deterrence – and the personal grievances that make al-Qa'idah a uniquely Saudi phenomenon will largely disappear. Yes, the suffering in Iraq and Palestine have been part of al-Qa'idah's list of complaints. It is unlikely that such extra-national

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/1949068.stm; and "Iran's Clerics Tout Vasectomies to Curb Baby Boom," Associated Press 20 June 2002.

⁵¹ According to the U.S. Department of State, "Oil revenues account for 55 percent of the GDP and 80 percent of government income.... Government spending, including spending on the national airline, power, water, telephone, education and health services, accounts for 24 percent of GDP. About 40 percent of the economy is nominally private...." United States, Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – 2001*, Internet: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/nea/8296.htm>.

⁵² This statement came in response to Iraqi calls for an oil embargo to protest the April 2002 Israeli operations in the West Bank. "Saudi Arabia: Oil Not a Weapon in Mideast," Reuters 19 April

issues alone, without the domestic Saudi woes and the perceived American complicity, would have been enough to mobilize Saudi citizens into such an organization. Note that we are witnessing comparatively little anti-American Islamist terrorism from nations of states whose regimes are identified less with the United States. Algeria is the most noticeable example, especially since Algerian Islamists have directed their terror towards the Western supporters of that state's regime, *videlicet*, the French.

In the even longer term, Roy and Fuller do not fear Islamist power because ultimately it will yield concrete evidence for the peoples of the Middle East that Islamism cannot and will not cure all the region's ills. The Nile will remain overtaxed; populations will continue to grow faster than regional economies and national infrastructures; corruption will not end, but merely change hands. The net result, they argue, will be either greater flexibility and moderation by Islamist regimes or their eventual ouster.⁵³ Throughout Roy's study, he is aware of strong parallels between the empty promises of Islamism and those of communism.⁵⁴ In another piece, he concludes thus:

Islamism is helpless against long-term sociological evolutions – urbanization, Westernization, expanded role of women – which will undermine the basic tenets of its ideology. Whatever judgement we pass on Islamism, it will not survive the test of actual rule – and it will fail faster than communism.⁵⁵

2002. The Saudi oil minister similarly announced that the kingdom would not allow a shortage to appear in world markets. "Saudi Arabia Ensures World Oil Supply," Reuters 9 April 2002.

⁵³ Fuller, "Islamism(s) in the Next Century," 144.

⁵⁴ Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, 3-7.

⁵⁵ Roy, "Islamists in Power," 83.

Others have noticed ideological similarities as well, comparing Islamism not just to communism, but to fascism and to other types of totalitarianism.⁵⁶ Francis Fukuyama refers to the phenomenon as "Islam-Fascism,"⁵⁷ while Fuller notices that "as with the socialist critique of capitalist practice, the Islamist diagnosis of the problem is probably better than the prescription for remedy."⁵⁸

The observed parallels between Islamism and communism have led Daniel Pipes to call for a similarly parallel American policy of containment towards Islamism.⁵⁹ Citing George F. Kennan's July 1947 *Foreign Affairs* article, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" (the so-called "X-Article") – an early post-World War II attempt to place the Soviet leadership, renowned for being one of the formative documents of American containment strategy – Pipes calls for "long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment."⁶⁰ Indeed, the parallels between Soviet behavior identified by Kennan and that of modern-day Islamists are remarkable:

[The Party leadership] doubtless believed – and found it easy to believe – that they alone knew what was good for society and that they would accomplish that good once their power was secure and unchallengeable. But in seeking that security of their own rule they were prepared to recognize no restrictions, either of God or man, on the character of their methods. And until such time as that

⁵⁶ Yehudah Mirsky, "From Fascism to Jihadism," *The New Republic Online* 9 April 2002, Internet: <http://www.thenewrepublic.com/doc.mhtml?i=express&s=mirsky041002>; Daniel Pipes, "Fundamentalist Muslims in World Politics," *Secularization and Fundamentalism Reconsidered: Religion and the Political Order Volume III*, eds. Jeffrey K. Hadden and Anson Shupe (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 128-9.

⁵⁷ Fukuyama, "Their Target: The Modern World."

⁵⁸ Graham E. Fuller, "Has Political Islam Failed?," *Middle East Insight* 11.2 (January-February 1995): 10.

⁵⁹ Daniel Pipes, "Who Is the Enemy?," *Commentary* 113.1 (January 2002), Internet: <http://www.danielpipes.org/articles/article.php?id=103>.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

security might be achieved, they placed far down on their scale of operational priorities the comforts and happiness of the peoples entrusted to their care.⁶¹

Beyond the brutalities of totalitarianism, the predicted and observed ideological adaptability of Islamists faced with the exigencies of power can also be found in Kennan's analysis:

[T]he leadership is at liberty to put forward for tactical purposes any particular thesis which it finds useful to the cause at any particular moment and to require the faithful and unquestioning acceptance of that thesis by the members of the movement as a whole. This means that truth is not a constant but is actually created, for all intents and purposes, by the Soviet leaders themselves. It may vary from week to week, from month to month. It is nothing absolute and immutable – nothing which flows from objective reality. It is only the most recent manifestation of the wisdom of those in whom the ultimate wisdom is supposed to reside, because they represent the logic of history.⁶²

Does it follow, then, that Kennan's prescription for containment fits the case of Islamism? Not exactly. Aside from the unique circumstances of the Cold War – the superpower symmetry of capabilities, vulnerabilities and understandings (all of which are absent in this present case)⁶³ – there are other factors that argue against the effectiveness of containment. American prevention of Islamists' achieving power will not work in the long run if that is the will of the local Muslim populations. Locally unwanted regimes cannot be externally maintained indefinitely. At issue here is the course to be taken by a *religion*. Its roots run far

⁶¹ George F. Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs* 25.4 (July 1947): 569. In the original publication, the author is identified only as "X."

⁶² *Ibid.*, 573.

deeper than did those of Soviet communism, and its course can only be decided upon by the faithful. This is not to say that there is nothing the United States can do to shape the futures of Muslim states. One of the hallmarks of religion – and Islam is no exception – is that it responds fundamentally and dynamically even to the behavior of those outside the fold. The United States can catalyze the process through which the hostile strains of Islamism will disappoint and be rejected like their Soviet predecessor, and it can do so easily – by being true to itself, its core values and its laws, in short, by exporting the American Revolution.

Fuller and Ian O. Lesser are correct in calling for policies that address specific behaviors rather than refer to Islam or “Islamic fundamentalism,” for doing the latter “only ha[s] the effect of highlighting the ideological dimension,”⁶⁴ and the fact remains that most Muslims have not chosen the path of al-Qa’idah. The goal of American policy is not to contain Islam. Rather, it must be clear to all that uniformly administered policies focus on actions – whether by Islamists, Israelis, Russians or Red Chinese. By conditioning American support, trade, technology, funding and all the other benefits of being an American ally on democratic reform, open markets, human rights and compliance with international law – as is called for, but only selectively practiced, in U.S. law – and by credibly challenging Islamist threats when they appear, the United States can engage in a policy not of containment, but what might be called “constraint,” with a significant deterrence component. Arguably, the cutting of trade with and non-and counter-proliferation efforts aimed toward Iran show that such a policy is already in practice. Make no mistake: this is not a call for a more ethical foreign policy because of some disjointed idealism. Rather, it is a call for a balanced policy of deterrence and inducements – in a similarly balanced mix of principle

⁶³ Brian Michael Jenkins, personal interview, 14 April 2002.

⁶⁴ Graham E. Fuller and Ian O. Lesser, *A Sense of Siege: The Geopolitics of Islam and the West* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 173.

and *realpolitik* – with the aim of heading off future human, national and international tragedies.

Islamism's spread will be kept in check only by indigenous Muslim populations, and if Roy and Fuller are correct, Islamism will ultimately collapse on its own. The United States and its allies can, however, accelerate the process by constraining Islamism's practitioners' ability to hold on to power at all costs. This will be even easier than in the Soviet case for two reasons. First, the states of the Muslim Middle East are exceedingly reliant on the outside world for survival, even for basic foodstuffs, to say nothing of automobiles, armaments and other high-tech manufactured goods. They cannot stand alone. Second, the spread of information technology means that more and more Middle Easterners know how life is elsewhere, under alternative political structures. It is not by chance that the Iranian regime has outlawed and recently increased its confiscation of privately owned satellite dishes.⁶⁵

In his call for containment, Pipes recognizes the limits of American influence: "Someone... other than Americans will be needed to conceptualize and deliver the anti-bin Laden message, someone with the necessary Islamic credentials and deep understanding of the culture. That someone is the moderate Muslim, the Muslim who hates the prospect of living under the reign of militant Islam and can envisage something better."⁶⁶ Fukuyama also sees the need for historically absent local action:

No Arab governments have decided on their own to voluntarily step down in favor of democratic rule, like the Spanish monarchy

⁶⁵ Nicolas Pelham, "Iran's Soccer Fervor Turns Political and Violent," *Christian Science Monitor* 15 November 2001, 7.

⁶⁶ Pipes, "Who Is the Enemy?"

after the dictator Franco or the Nationalists in Taiwan or the various military dictatorships in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and other parts of Latin America. There is not a single instance of an oil-rich state in the Persian Gulf that has used its wealth to create a self-sustaining industrial society, instead of creating a society of corrupt rentiers who over time have become more and more fanatically Islamist. These failures, and not anything that the outside world has done or refrained from doing, is the root cause of the Muslim world's stagnation.⁶⁷

Fifty-five years ago, Kennan also realized that America could not do it all:

It would be an exaggeration to say that American behavior unassisted and alone could exercise a power of life and death over the Communist movement and bring about the early fall of Soviet power in Russia. But the United States has it in its power to increase enormously the strains under which Soviet policy must operate, to force upon the Kremlin a far greater degree of moderation and circumspection than it has had to observe in recent years, and in this way to promote tendencies which must eventually find their outlet in either the break-up or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power. For no mystical, Messianic movement – and particularly not that of the Kremlin – can face frustration indefinitely without eventually adjusting itself in one way or another to the logic of that state of affairs.⁶⁸

Having said that, Kennan concluded his piece as we will conclude ours: by calling on American decision-makers to have faith in the principles upon which the United States was founded and grew strong, and to act accordingly, for they have and will continue to serve it well. His words are as sage today as they were when they were written, at the dawn of another frightening, challenging time in American history:

⁶⁷ Fukuyama, "Their Target: The Modern World."

Surely, there was never a fairer test of national quality than this. In the light of these circumstances, the thoughtful observer of Russian-American relations will find no cause for complaint in the Kremlin's challenge to American society. He will rather experience a certain gratitude to a Providence which, by providing the American people with this implacable challenge, has made their entire security as a nation dependent on their pulling themselves together and accepting the responsibilities of moral and political leadership that history plainly intended them to bear.⁶⁹

Conclusion

Though deterrence has been one of the cornerstones of American defense policy for decades, it is clear that deterrence is not a tool that easily can be applied as-is to the problem of counter-terrorism. After examining a number of plausible historical, psychological and other reasons that deterrence was not achieved vis-à-vis al-Qa'idah prior to September 11, we analyzed a number of deterrence policy prescriptions from the Cold War era, many of which assumed that relevant interactions would take place between states. In the current context, we believe that some of those prescriptions, designed to strengthen deterrence, in fact would have the opposite effect. We conclude, therefore, that analysts and decision-makers must pay careful attention to the contextual framework of the current conflict, and particularly that of what is in many ways a non-traditional enemy, as well as to the psychological factors that influence their own as well as their adversaries' perception of events and foreign policy messages in order to determine the most effective courses of action against the various specific elements of the terrorist system. Doing so will not come naturally. Rather,

⁶⁸ Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," 582.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

analysts and decision-makers need to be trained in the often simple techniques that can at once limit the distorting effects of psychological biases, lend insight into the perceptions of others and create openness to previously unconsidered models and policy options. It bears reiterating that deterrence is a substrategy that cannot stand by itself. Complementing deterrence with a package of gradual inducements selected on the basis of the insights gained through the kind of cultural and social psychological analysis discussed throughout this dissertation offers the long-term potential to achieve the goal traditionally assigned to deterrence alone: allowing the United States to deal with future contingencies by avoiding them, by creating situations where attacks are not even attempted.

In drawing from the experiences documented in the case studies, and applying relevant lessons to the case of deterring al-Qa'ida, we have tried to demonstrate in practical terms the importance of recognizing and addressing the effects of motivated and unmotivated psychological biases on foreign and counter-terrorism policy-making and analysis, and to provide examples of how to do so. More important, however, than the specific methodologies used here are the ideas upon which they rest. Specifically, the distortion and narrowing of vision caused by these universal, naturally occurring biases affect intelligence analysts and policy-makers alike. Both groups' understandings of foreign actors and policy options stand to be improved by the continued development of analytic methods and mindsets that allow for a wider spectrum of possibilities. The potential lethality of future combat with terrorists or with other as yet unknown antagonists both at home and abroad underscores the importance of this kind of improved analysis and the collection of lessons learned it can provide over time.

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